



USAID | **SERBIA**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY FORWARD PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

AUGUST 2015

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Democracy International, Inc.

Submitted to:

USAID/Serbia

Prepared by:

Melanie Reimer, Team Leader

Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic, Civil Society Expert

Irena Slunjski, Local Philanthropy Expert

Contractor:

Democracy International, Inc.

7600 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 1010

Bethesda, MD 20814

Tel: 301-961-1660

www.democracyinternational.com



MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY FORWARD PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

AUGUST 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | III |
| ACRONYMS | IV |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | VI |
| EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS..... | VI |
| PROJECT BACKGROUND | VI |
| EVALUATION METHODOLOGY..... | VII |
| KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS..... | VII |
| KEY RECOMMENDATIONS | X |
| EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS..... | I |
| EVALUATION PURPOSE | I |
| EVALUATION QUESTIONS | I |
| PROJECT BACKGROUND..... | I |
| DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT | I |
| CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT | 4 |
| EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS..... | 5 |
| DOCUMENT REVIEW | 5 |
| KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS | 6 |
| SURVEYS..... | 6 |
| GROUP INTERVIEWS | 7 |
| LIMITATIONS | 7 |
| FINDINGS..... | 8 |
| PROGRESS TOWARDS EXPECTED RESULTS | 8 |
| INTERACTION AMONG COMPONENTS AND IMPLEMENTERS | 23 |
| MANAGEMENT OF TRANSITION BY USAID..... | 24 |
| GENERAL – PROJECT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT | 27 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | 31 |
| ANNEX A: STATEMENT OF WORK..... | A-I |
| ANNEX B: EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY | B-I |
| ANNEX C: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS..... | C-I |
| ANNEX D: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED..... | D-I |
| ANNEX E: DESK REVIEW DOCUMENTS..... | E-I |
| ANNEX F: ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SURVEY DATA | F-I |
| ANNEX G: CIVIL SOCIETY FORWARD (ISC) PERFORMANCE DATA TABLE..... | G-I |
| ANNEX H: CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENTS..... | H-I |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This evaluation would not have been possible without the contributions of the current and former staff of USAID/Serbia and the key implementers of the CSF Project, whether in Belgrade, Washington DC, Vermont, or on assignment somewhere else in the world. Many of those people are no longer working on activities funded by the Project, for various reasons, but they still made time for our team, in person and by email, sometimes repeatedly. In addition to patiently and candidly answering many questions and sharing numerous documents, they helped to link us with the right people to help us in gaining an overall perspective of the Project and its context.

Of course, many other informants across Serbia, from civil society, government and other sectors, gave their time freely to participate in telephone or in-person interviews, sometimes in addition to responding to online survey questions. Although they may never perceive any direct benefit of this process, the participation of each and every individual added value to the evaluation, which it is hoped will ultimately contribute to an ever-stronger civil society sector in Serbia.

ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|---|
| ADS | Automated Directive System |
| APS | Annual Program Statement (USAID solicitation mechanism) |
| AWC | Autonomous Women's Centre |
| BCIF | Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (renamed Trag Foundation in 2013) |
| BCSP | Belgrade Center for Security Policy |
| CDF | Centre for Democracy Foundation |
| CRTA | Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability |
| CSAI | Civil Society Advocacy Initiative (Serbia) |
| CSF | Civil Society Forward |
| COP | Chief of Party |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| ET | Evaluation Team |
| EU | European Union |
| FOG | Fixed Obligation Grant |
| HRSI | Human Rights Sustainability Initiatives |
| ISC | Institute for Sustainable Communities |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| LGBT | Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender |
| LSG | Local Self-Government |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NCD | National Coalition for Decentralization |
| NGO | Nongovernmental Organization |
| NUNS | Independent Journalists Association of Serbia |
| NUPAS | Non-US organization Pre-award Survey |
| OCCS | Office for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Government of Serbia |
| PAD | Project Appraisal Document |
| PAS | Pre-award Survey |
| PMEP | Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan |

| | |
|-------|--|
| RFA | Request for Applications |
| STAR | System for Transformation and Results |
| TACSO | Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations (EU program office) |
| US(A) | United States of America |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| YUCOM | Lawyers Committee for Human Rights |
| ZI | Zajecar Initiative |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The purpose of the evaluation is to conduct an independent review at the completion of Phase One of the USAID/Serbia Civil Society Forward (CSF) Project. It aims to assess the extent to which the Project achieved or is on track to achieving its intended results, and to assess the implementation approach and how effective it was in facilitating the transition to direct implementation by local partners. The results of the evaluation will be used by USAID/Serbia and its Phase Two implementing partners, and will also be of interest to USAID Washington stakeholders as they continue to roll out reforms and learn from the global experience in implementing Local Solutions.

USAID/Serbia requested the Evaluation Team (ET) to research the following specific evaluation questions: 1) To what extent has CSF achieved, or is on track to achieving the expected results identified in the Project Appraisal Document?; 2) How effective has CSF been in expanding the prospects for local Serbia philanthropy to support/sustain civil society activity, including for human rights and other politically sensitive groups?; 3) How effective was the interaction among different CSF partners (including sub-recipients) across different mechanisms?; and 4) What have been the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's management systems for supporting the transition to local CSO partners?

PROJECT BACKGROUND

CSF is a four-year \$10.25 million project that was launched in November 2012, and Phase One was completed in January 2015. The Project was designed to strengthen the civil society sector in Serbia, while serving as a learning laboratory for transition to a new development paradigm as envisioned in USAID Forward/Local Solutions. The goal is to support a strong and robust civil society sector that is able to advocate with the government on institutional reforms, engage citizens in policy- and decision-making processes, and continue progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration. The Project has four objectives:

1. Continuing to support local civic activism and policy advocacy initiatives enhancing Serbia's European Union (EU) accession prospects, particularly outside Belgrade and major cities.
2. Improving prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to expand potential sources of support.
3. Strengthening civil society capacity, networks/linkages and innovation to better address community and social challenges through collective action.
4. Engaging and supporting the Government of Serbia in its efforts to enhance cooperation with and improve the regulatory and legal environment for civil society.

During Phase One, the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) was the primary implementer, and took the lead in activities under the Objectives 1, 2, and 3. ISC worked closely with 11 Serbian CSOs as "Core Partners" throughout the project, and in Year 2 incorporated six human rights organizations as additional major beneficiaries. All of those organizations were targeted with significant grant funding for a range of projects, and with intensive capacity building tailored to their needs.

Under Objective 4, USAID provided modest financial support to the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society (OCCS) of the Government of Serbia, aimed at strengthening the enabling environment and boosting the capacity of the Office to play a key role in that process. As the third component of the Project, USAID gave grants directly to three Serbian CSOs, as a pilot initiative to assess how well the mission and the grantees would be able to cope with the experience.

Under Phase Two, USAID is continuing its direct engagement with local CSOs and its support to the OCCS, and awarding grants directly to CSOs through a competitive process, while the role of the US implementing partner, Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) has been discontinued.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A team of three experts in civil society and philanthropy conducted the evaluation, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The document review included the core agreements between USAID and all implementers; progress reports and final reports submitted by those implementers; the Project Appraisal Document; USAID/Serbia strategy documents; USAID Forward documents, and core documents related to the recent direct grants to CSOs using the APS mechanism.

The team conducted 56 in-person interviews in seven towns or cities in Serbia, as well as other locations by telephone. Informants included key staff of USAID, ISC, the three direct grantees, Core Partner CSOs, the Government of Serbia, other donor organizations and CSOs, as well as civil society experts. The evaluation team fielded two web-based surveys; the first targeted leaders of all CSOs that had received sub-grants from Core Partners, to learn about how they viewed the financial and other support received and how their work had been affected. The total sample size was 164 CSOs, and the response rate was 68 percent. The second survey was carried out amongst the 18 former staff of ISC in Serbia, to allow the opportunity for all to express their views on the Project. Finally, the team conducted seven group interviews with a total of 36 representatives of sub-grantee CSOs in Nis, Zajecar, Novi Pazar, Novi Sad, Leskovac and Prijepolje.

The most important limitations were: little experience had been accumulated on implementation of direct grants; many informants were not aware of the USAID support to the OCCS; it was difficult to identify available national government officials outside the OCCS, and to arrange individual and group interviews with all of the desired informants on short notice; and the Project as a whole had no Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP).¹ The PMEP for the ISC component had serious weaknesses (unclear indicators, no baselines, and six expected results left without indicators), therefore was of limited usefulness to the evaluation (and to the Project as a monitoring tool).

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Progress towards Results

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent has CSF achieved, or is on track to achieving the expected results identified in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD)?

1. Advocacy and Civic Engagement

With respect to the advocacy grants made to Core Partner CSOs, most activities focused on preparatory efforts based on longer term objectives, rather than full-blown campaigns. Due to delays, these projects only lasted 14-16 months. The CSOs faced challenges in finding sufficient time for advocacy work while also engaged in intensive capacity building under CSF. There seemed to be differing opinions between USAID and ISC about the relative importance of the competing priorities of capacity building and advocacy work. However, most Core Partners succeeded in bringing issues to the government agenda and building relationships. Several national level policies or laws were changed following advocacy by Core Partners, such as inclusion of provisions related to the Internet in the new media law. In relation to civic activism, CSF-funded initiatives encouraged greater citizen participation in decision making at the local level, while boosting the visibility of CSOs in those communities. Though of very short duration, the small influx of resources enabled them to attract new volunteers and gain some recognition from local government and citizens.

2. CSO Capacity

The primary target in relation to CSO management capacity and financial sustainability was the 11 Core Partners, and to a lesser extent the six human rights grantees. Rather generous grant funding (\$30,000) to each Core Partner was an unusual opportunity to devote significant resources to internal capacities, and

¹ Note: A PMEP is not required by USAID policy at the Project/Project Appraisal Documents level, which can encompass a number of diverse activities. Monitoring and Evaluation Plans are only required at the activity level.

they consistently cited capacity improvements as their most important achievement within CSF. Bundling of financial and technical support for capacity building together with funding for program activities of each CSO was an effective strategy. The mock pre-award survey helped pinpoint areas for change for the Core Partners to qualify for direct funding from USAID, and the STAR self-assessment was highly valued. Unfortunately, several attempts to measure change in capacity were fraught with difficulties in methodology and timing, and did not produce reliable data.

Both Partners and sub-grantees commented positively on the capacity building provided by Core Partners to sub-grantees. Among surveyed sub-grantees, 88 percent had either a very positive or positive view of the technical assistance received. Training and information provision appear to be making a real difference to development of those organizations, even though they face serious sustainability challenges.

3. Linkages, Collaboration and Partnership

ISC-led efforts to stimulate CSO networking primarily targeted Core Partners, and had a modest effect. Trainings and other Project events regularly brought Core Partners together (and in Year 2, the HRSI grantees), and several mentioned relationships that had been initiated or strengthened as a result. The attempt to introduce a high-tech tool to assist in networking was overly complex and did not gain much traction. At least five Core Partners did notable outreach with other CSOs, although some Core Partners did not have robust networks with which to leverage CSF inputs. One new coalition emerged, aimed at monitoring the process of EU accession, but generally, coalitions and formal networks of CSOs were not significantly affected by CSF.

For the most part, pre-existing linkages of Core Partners with national government were continued under the Project. Consultations on the National Strategy for Development of Civil Society, organized by the OCCS, were a useful platform for bringing together representatives of local government and CSOs. Some progress in CSO-government relations was also made through community improvement initiatives that united CSOs, citizens and local officials around practical problems. These may ultimately provide an impetus for ongoing interaction. Generally, CSOs and experts consider that the attitude of Serbian government officials (at all levels) towards civil society is still extremely wary, and vice versa.

4. Government Capacity and Enabling Environment

USAID contributed just over \$200,000 to support the OCCS, which successfully complemented larger funding by the European Union. CSF made possible the series of consultative meetings with local self-government and CSOs across the country, on the first draft of the National Strategy (as mentioned above). The activities supported by CSF have boosted the visibility and credibility of the OCCS, which is however still relatively weak as an institution. With respect to the enabling environment, minor changes to legislation and regulations were adopted during CSF, but with little connection to Project support. Despite modest progress in recent years, the legal framework remains far from ideal, especially in relation to financial sustainability. The National Strategy should set the agenda for further reform as it is rolled out.

5. Public Perception of Civil Society

It appears that general public perception of CSOs in Serbia has improved slightly in the last several years, based on the views of most interviewed informants as well as secondary sources such as the USAID-published CSO Sustainability Index. However, widely publicized scandals and critiques by high-level officials continue to undermine the image of the entire sector, and Serbian civil society continues to trail its neighbors in terms of public image according to the USAID CSO Sustainability Index. Also, the public communications skills of CSOs are still weak according to expert sources in the media and civil society sectors. Collaboration between CSOs, citizens and government at community level is showing positive results for perception, and has potential to be scaled up for wider impact.

B. Prospects for Local Philanthropy

Evaluation Question 2: How effective has CSF been in expanding the prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to support/sustain civil society activity, including for human rights and other politically sensitive groups?

Trag Foundation carried out the CSF strategy for improving prospects for local philanthropy. A principal focus was on supporting small and medium-sized organizations to develop fundraising skills and cultivate philanthropy in their communities, through a variety of sub-grant schemes. Small grants to 22 organizations helped them raise \$80,000 from donations and income generation activities, while larger grants aimed at stimulating innovative models for fundraising allowed five CSOs to generate \$70,000.

Corporate awareness regarding financial support to CSOs has been raised to some extent, in part owing to CSF-supported initiatives. However, fundraising efforts have been hampered by the economic downturn since 2009, low public trust, and a legal framework not yet conducive to philanthropy or income generation by CSOs. With respect to human rights organizations and other politically sensitive groups, there has been little or no recent progress. They tend to be fairly disconnected from the populace, and there is mutual reluctance among the most prominent human rights organizations and the business sector to engage with each other. However, some smaller organizations are finding ways to generate income and donations, which may start to pave the way forward for this sub-sector. In sum, local philanthropy in Serbia is growing, but very slowly.

C. Interaction among Components and Implementers

Evaluation Question 3: How effective was interaction among different CSF partners (including sub-recipients) and across different mechanisms and how can USAID strengthen that interaction during Phase III?

Interactions among the primary implementers largely took place on an ad hoc and informal basis, and did not appear to be a priority for either USAID or the implementers. Pre-existing ties between implementers continued, for example between Trag Foundation and OCCS, but there was little evidence of relationships being forged or strengthened in any significant way. Overall, only USAID staff were well informed about the different objectives and elements of the CSF Project. While this had no evident effect on the results of CSF, it limited understanding among key stakeholders and implementers of the scope and overarching strategy of USAID's support at this time of transition. This may have discouraged potential synergies among donors, Core Partners, and others within or outside of the Project. USAID could promote greater synergies and exchange of lessons learned by regularly sharing written highlights of all CSO grants and OCCS activities among all CSF recipients, and facilitating or sponsoring meetings of grantees and OCCS.

D. Management of Transition by USAID

Evaluation Question 4: What have been the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's management systems for supporting the transition to local CSO partners?

To date, USAID/Serbia staff report no serious difficulties with management of APS grants and government-to-government support; OCCS staff and APS grantees were also generally satisfied with the process. This reflects positively on USAID's handling of these processes, though only eight APS grants had been awarded at the time of data collection; a new APS round is underway, which could prove more of a test. The main challenge in the transition has been delays in contracting processes, for both OCCS collaboration and APS 2014 grants.

There are concerns that the Fixed Obligation Grant system is not strong on measuring outcomes and their quality (as compared to outputs), and it is not yet clear how USAID will evaluate the grants. As well, the APS grant solicitation and selection process is not sufficiently transparent and understandable to the uninitiated. As Serbian government entities and corporate donors (hopefully) become more involved in supporting civil society, it is ever more important for USAID to model best practices in grant-making.

Although the capacity required to qualify for APS grants (including mandatory vetting of internal capacities) makes access to direct funding difficult for the majority of CSOs in Serbia, USAID has chosen to fund re-granting activities by more well-established organizations, as an important mechanism for channeling support to smaller organizations. However, there has been little outreach and communication by USAID with CSOs outside Belgrade about the APS solicitations. Thus far, only one of eight grants has gone to an organization outside Belgrade, although activities of most grantees extend to other parts of the country. Perhaps the most important challenge for USAID in its ongoing support to Serbian civil society is finding the best way to extend the benefits of its funding to small and mid-sized organizations, especially outside of Belgrade and other major cities.

E. Project Design and Management

Project start-up by ISC was slower than expected, due to overlap with the closing stages of CSAI and difficulty in recruiting a Chief of Party. Additional delays arose in 2014 due to elections and disastrous flooding. The result was compressed timeframes and in some situations a “box-checking” approach to implementation. There was minimal allowance for contingencies in the timing of Phase One, and the plans for spending and activities developed by ISC in response to USAID’s solicitation were overly ambitious.

The selection of Core Partners was not seen as transparent or fully competitive, and there was minimal (if any) benefit from the closed nature of the competition. The opportunity to be part of CSF was crucial in a context of shrinking donor funding, and this opaque process promoted a view in civil society that the only ones with a real chance at this lucrative partnership with ISC (and the clearest path to future funding by USAID) were those perceived as pre-existing favorites. Project reporting by ISC as well as Trag tended to be highly selective, with a lot of attention paid to successes while elements that did not have the expected results were skimmed over or ignored. The PMEP was given low priority; most of the 20 indicators were vaguely worded and no clear baselines were set.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue with **APS-based granting to CSOs**, but with improved transparency and more expeditious decision-making, careful monitoring, and consideration of a separate category of smaller grants.
2. Continue to support **re-granting or sub-granting**, ideally spread among several grant-making organizations, including a focus on modest but visible **community projects**. Sub-granting processes should be based on clear and consistent guidelines, and be closely monitored.
3. Prioritize ongoing **capacity building of the civil society sector**, at both “advanced” level and grassroots.
4. Continue support to **institutional strengthening of the OCCS and its core activities**, potentially with increased levels of funding.
5. Support improvements to the **enabling environment** for civil society through various complementary and coordinated channels; adoption and timely implementation of the National Strategy for Development of Civil Society are of paramount importance.
6. USAID, in consultation with other donors and the OCCS, should consider ways of encouraging the establishment of a **sector lead resource organization or network** in Serbia, without however becoming a driving force of such an organization.
7. Develop an **exit strategy** well in advance of any anticipated USAID phase-out or further reduction of support to civil society in Serbia.
8. Support development of a comprehensive long-term communications strategy at the national level for enhancement of the **public perception and credibility** of civil society across the board.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this performance evaluation is to conduct a full, evidence-based and independent mid-term review at the completion of Phase One of the USAID/Serbia Civil Society Forward (CSF) project. First, it will assess the extent to which the CSF project (including all of its awards) achieved or is on track to achieving its intended development results related to strengthening the civil society sector. Second, the evaluation will assess the implementation approach utilized and how effective it was in facilitating the transition to direct implementation by local partners. In particular, the evaluation will assess the capacity development role of the US implementing partner and the extent to which it contributed to the capability of local civil society organizations (CSO) partners. The results of the evaluation will be used by USAID/Serbia, and its Phase Two implementing partners (including both government and CSOs), to both inform and make necessary adjustment to CSF Phase Two implementation. The results will also be of interest to a broader audience of USAID Washington stakeholders as they continue to roll out reforms and learn from the global experience of implementing Local Solutions.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Evaluation Team (ET) was asked to research a specific set of evaluation questions, within the framework of the overall purpose set out above.

1. To what extent has CSF achieved, or is on track to achieving the expected results identified in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD)?
2. How effective has CSF been in expanding the prospects for local Serbia philanthropy to support/sustain civil society activity, including for human rights and other politically sensitive groups?
3. How effective was the interaction among different CSF partners (including sub-recipients) across different mechanisms?
4. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's management systems for supporting the transition to local CSO partners?

In order to facilitate and clarify the focus of the evaluation, the above questions were defined in further detail by the ET, as set out in the Evaluation Design and Methodology in Annex B.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

CSF is a multi-faceted project that was launched in November 2012 with multiple implementing partners and award mechanisms. January 2015 marked the completion of the first phase of the four-year \$10.25 million Civil Society Forward Project (CSF). CSF was designed to strengthen the civil society sector in Serbia, while serving as a learning laboratory for transitioning to a new development paradigm as envisioned in USAID Forward/Local Solutions. Civil Society Forward's goal is to support a strong and robust civil society sector that is able to advocate with the government on much needed institutional reforms, engage citizens in policy- and decision-making processes, and continue progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

CSF was explicitly designed to be implemented in two phases. Phase One, which is roughly the first two years of the performance period, included a mix of both traditional methods (with a US implementing partner to build capacity of local organizations), direct assistance to local organizations on a pilot basis, and

direct government to government support targeting the Government of Serbia's Office for Civil Society Cooperation (OCCS). A full listing of CSF Phase One implementing partners and their roles is provided in Table 1 below. Under Phase Two, USAID is continuing its direct engagement with local civil society organizations and its support to the OCCS, while the role of the US implementing partner, Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) was discontinued at the conclusion of Phase One.

The Project worked towards this goal through four objectives²:

5. Continuing to support local civic activism and policy advocacy initiatives enhancing Serbia's European Union (EU) accession prospects, particularly outside Belgrade and major cities.
6. Improving prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to expand potential sources of support.
7. Strengthening civil society capacity, networks/linkages and innovation to better address community and social challenges through collective action.
8. Engaging and supporting the Government of Serbia in its efforts to enhance cooperation with and improve the regulatory and legal environment for civil society.

Table 1: Civil Society Forward – Phase One Implementation Instruments

| Prime Implementer and Award Name/Type | Role/Objectives | Duration | Funding Level |
|---|---|-------------------|---------------|
| Institute for Sustainable Communities "Civil Society Forward", a cooperative agreement with a US organization. | This activity supports the transition from US to local CSO implementing partners through the following objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist local civic activism and policy advocacy initiatives (particularly outside of Belgrade and other major cities) that advance Serbia's Euro-Atlantic integration. • Improve prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to expand potential sources of civil society support. • Strengthen civil society capacity, networks/linkages and innovation ISC worked closely with 11 Serbian CSOs designated as "Core Partners", that were both grant recipients and beneficiaries of capacity development support. In Year 2 of the Project, In September 2013, USAID and ISC signed a modification to incorporate the Human Rights Sustainability Initiative (HRSI) in CSF. As a result, six human rights-oriented CSOs were added to the cohort of directly targeted organizations. | 11/1/12 – 1/30/15 | \$7,750,338 |
| Civic Initiatives (pilot grant #1) "Empowered Youth for Positive Changes in South Serbia and Sandzak", Fixed Obligation Grant No. AID-169-F-13-00001 | To improve position and reduce marginalization of young people in South Serbia and Sandzak by building capacities of youth, youth groups and youth-related CSOs to engage in public life, thus contributing to the development of more efficient, open and democratic local communities and wider society. In addition to the development outcomes that result from the program, this activity was intended to provide a learning opportunity for USAID mission management on the management, resource and staffing implications of direct engagement with local partners. | 6/30/13 – 9/19/14 | \$248,800 |

² These objectives are those listed in the Project Appraisal Document of June 2012, which is consistent with the draft logical framework of the same date. However, it should be pointed out that the Results Framework for the ISC-implemented component, which was the basis for their PMP, used quite different wording at both objectives and goal level. That Results Framework can be found in the attachments to Annex A.

| Prime Implementer and Award Name/Type | Role/Objectives | Duration | Funding Level |
|---|---|--------------------|---------------|
| Trag Foundation (pilot grant # 2) "The Social Care Reform Initiative", Fixed Obligation Grant No. AID-I 69-F-13-00002 | The overall goal of the project is to contribute to the adoption of EU standards into Serbia's social care system through increasing participation of civil society organizations in the reform process. Specific results include: 1) Community based CSOs are equipped with information, knowledge and skills for their participation in social care reforms 2) Community based CSOs have resources to initiate advocacy and watchdog activities towards the implementation of reforms at a local level 3) Models of good practice for social contracting are created in cooperation with local authorities where possible In addition to the development outcomes that result from this activity, it was intended to provide a learning opportunity for USAID mission on the management, resource and staffing implications of direct engagement with local partners. | 7/19/13 - 1/18/15 | \$235,000 |
| Nezavisno Udruzenje Novinera Srbije (NUNS) (pilot grant #3) "Campaign for Media Literacy in Serbia", Fixed Obligation Grant No. AID-I 69-F-13-00004 | Aim is to build an understanding of the media role in society and to increase citizen demand for quality journalism and information. Short term objective is to implement a multimedia campaign on media literacy and responsible journalism targeting youth, journalist and civic education teachers. In addition to the development outcomes that result from this activity, it was intended to provide a learning opportunity for USAID mission on the management, resource and staffing implications of direct engagement with local partners. | 8/20/13 - 11/19/14 | \$248,833 |
| Office for Cooperation with Civil Society "Civil Society Enabling Environment", Output Based Reimbursement mechanism, # I 69-PA-2014-001 | Objective is to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society in Serbia and align it with relevant European norms. More specifically, resources will be used to help build core capacities of the office to deliver its mandate to support Serbian civil society. Directly supports dialogue/consultations between the office and civil society. | 2/14/14 - 8/13/15 | \$214,834 |

Project Monitoring Systems

The Project as a whole did not have a Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP).³ USAID and ISC eventually agreed on a PMEP for the ISC-led component, about one year into implementation. A copy of the PMEP indicators, with the reported annual targets and results is attached as Annex G. As described later in the report, that PMEP had serious flaws, including unclear indicators, ineffective tools for measurement, and lack of baselines. In addition, it did not contain indicators for a number of the expected

³ Note: A PMEP is not required by USAID policy at the Project/Project Appraisal Documents level, which can encompass a number of diverse activities. Monitoring and Evaluation Plans are only required at the activity level.

results defined in the Project Appraisal Document that clearly related to the ISC component. Notable gaps were public perception, expanded strategies for advocacy, linkages within civil society, consolidation of coalitions, linkages with citizens, and development of partnerships with government and media. The two expected results related to host government capacity and enhanced governmental policies and legislation were left without defined indicators, as they fell outside the scope of the ISC component.

CSO Partners of ISC-led component

ISC pre-selected two Serbian organizations as implementing partners: the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (now known as Trag Foundation) and Zajecar Initiative. Trag Foundation (“Trag”) was ISC’s primary implementing partner for grant-making to community-level groups and organizations, and also played a leading role in promoting individual and corporate philanthropy. As part of its \$1.5 million agreement with ISC, Trag worked closely with Zajecar Initiative (ZI) to strengthen the latter’s capacities and sustainability through mentoring and sharing of experiences and grant-making tools, among other things. ZI received a grant from ISC of approximately \$150,000 in order to expand its grassroots grant-making capacities to promote civic engagement in Eastern Serbia and set up a community foundation in that region. Together, Trag and ZI disbursed approximately \$1 million in sub-grants.

In the first six months of the Project, ISC and USAID selected nine additional Core Partners through a non-competitive process, as follows: Autonomous Women’s Center (AWC), Belgrade Center for Security Policy (BCSP), Center for Democracy Foundation (CDF), Open Club Association for Development of Children and Youth (“Open Club”), Share Foundation, Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation, National Coalition for Decentralization (NCD), and Smart Kolektiv. (The last four listed, as well as Trag Foundation, are currently receiving direct funding from USAID, awarded through the 2014 Annual Program Statement (APS) mechanism as part of CSF Phase Two.)

Each of those 11 Core Partners received a \$30,000 grant for capacity building of their organization, and the nine that were not pre-selected as implementing partners each received a separate grant ranging from \$110,000 to \$130,000 to support execution of projects lasting 14-16 months. Most of those projects were focused on advocacy for policy reform at the national level. ISC also provided each partner tailored technical assistance throughout implementation.

The six human rights organizations selected to participate in the CSF Project under the Human Rights Sustainability Initiative (HRSI) in Year 2 were: Urban In, Humanitarian Law Center, Labris Organization for Lesbian Human Rights, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), and Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. Their eight-month grants ranged from \$47,000 to \$65,000, with the purpose of supporting a range of human rights advocacy, monitoring, and networking activities. These partners also received training and technical assistance from ISC, with a focus on their future sustainability.

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

As stated in the Civil Society Assessment completed by USAID in 2011, “*the political trajectory of the country in the 1990s and early 2000s as well as years of war and isolation, Serbia’s civil society has lost more than a decade in terms of its development and consolidation.*”⁴ Civil society, especially human rights organizations, played a significant role in the downfall of the Milosevic regime and subsequent transition towards democratic rule, and for better or worse, that dramatic period continues to dominate many Serbians’ attitude towards the sector. Notwithstanding considerable inputs from the donor community since the mid-2000s, Serbian CSOs continued to face major challenges in terms of organizational capacity, public perception and sustainability at the time when the CSF Project was conceived in 2012.

⁴ Serbia Civil Society Assessment Report, prepared for USAID/Serbia and Montenegro, by Catherine Barnes, 26 October 2011.

During its implementation from 2012 to early 2015, the CSF Project and overall support to civil society was affected by a number of contextual developments and general political and socioeconomic issues. A parliamentary election was held on 16 March 2014, with 19 electoral lists competing for 250 members of the National Assembly. The election was called early due to political disputes, and coincided with local elections in Belgrade. The election had significant repercussions on all levels of governance with reshuffling mandates and turnover of senior officials.

Another remarkable event that affected the work of CSOs and funding for various initiatives were the floods in May 2014, affecting approximately 1.6 million people and resulting in 51 casualties. Around 32,000 people were evacuated from their homes, with approximately 5,000 moving to temporary shelters. On May 15, the Government declared a state of emergency for its entire territory. The recovery interventions and subsequent assistance to reconstruction became an immediate priority of the government and the donors, drawing attention and funds from different developmental interventions to flood recovery and disaster risk mitigation.

More generally, Serbia has seen a gradual but marked reduction of activity in the last several years by foreign donors; most embassies and government development agencies are gradually phasing out their support to Serbia as the country progresses towards European integration. Thus, civil society struggled during the Project with diversification of funding sources as well as with improvement of public perception. Philanthropy and corporate social responsibility are presenting some new avenues for funding, though many challenges remain before these can be relied upon as pillars of support to civil society, notably in relation to the legal enabling environment.

US government support for civil society in Serbia has been extensive for at least the past decade, with USAID seen as the biggest supporter in the foreign donor community. In 2006, USAID launched the Civil Society Advocacy Initiative (CSAI) as a \$12 million, five-year program to help CSOs better represent the needs of ordinary people, and for civil society to become a more influential and trusted partner of businesses and the government. CSAI implementation was led by the Institute for Sustainable Communities, along with four core partners. After three additional ceiling increases between 2008 and 2010 and an extension of two years, the program ended in May 2013 as a seven-year, \$27.5 million initiative. The final seven months of CSAI overlapped with Phase One of the CSF Project.

EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation was conducted by a team of three experts: Team Leader, Ms. Melanie Reimer, an international expert with significant experience in civil society programming and in conducting similar evaluations; Ms. Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic, a civil society specialist; and Ms. Irena Slunjski, an expert in local philanthropy. In designing and implementing this evaluation, the Evaluation Team (ET) has followed the guidelines outlined in USAID's Request for Task Order Proposal and accompanying Scope of Work (Annex A). The team used both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather data to investigate the evaluation questions, as outlined in the Evaluation Design and Methodology Annex (Annex B). Four main methods were used: document review, key informant interviews (KII), surveys, and group interviews. Information from these methods has been triangulated to ensure reliable findings, while discrepant observations and data have been noted and used as well. Data collection for the evaluation was conducted over the course of about 12 business days in June 2015.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The ET reviewed a comprehensive set of documents related to CSF Phase One, most provided by USAID and ISC, and on the context in which the Project was implemented. In addition, the ET requested and

reviewed a variety of core documents related to the Phase Two direct grants being made to CSOs by USAID/Serbia using the APS mechanism, which was launched in April 2014. Additional documents were identified and sourced from key informants and through independent research by the ET, primarily via the Internet. A complete list of the documents and websites reviewed for the evaluation can be found in Annex E.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The ET conducted 56 semi-structured interviews that involved 67 diverse key informants (36 of them female, and 31 male) with knowledge of CSF's objectives, activities, beneficiaries and/or outcomes, in seven towns or cities in Serbia as well as several international locations.⁵ Informants were selected by the team taking into account such factors as location, gender, type of support received from the Project, and type of organization; the team aimed for a reasonable balance of those factors among interviewees, to ensure that a wide range of voices were heard. The evaluation team visited Southwest Serbia (including Sandjak), Southeast Serbia (including Zajecar), and Vojvodina in northern Serbia, in addition to a substantial number of interviews with key informants in Belgrade. The key informants are listed by name and organizational affiliation in Annex D.

The evaluation team used this method to collect data from USAID officials in Serbia and Washington, DC; current and former ISC staff; staff of the three CSOs that received pilot direct grants; leaders of the Core Partner CSOs and of CSOs targeted by the HRSI component in Year 2; government officials in the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society; staff of other donor organizations; experts in civil society issues in Serbia; representatives of selected recipients of sub-grants; and local government officials. (Throughout this document, when the word "interviewed" is used, it refers to informants that participated in KIs. Those questioned via surveys or focus groups are clearly indicated with different wording according to the method used).

The evaluation team conducted interviews in English or Serbian, based on question guides developed to suit the particularities of different categories of informants and respond to the core evaluation questions. A sample of those guides can be found in Annex C. Interviewees were given the option of appearing in the informant list (none objected).

SURVEYS

The ET carried out two web-based surveys in order to supplement the data collected by other means. Both surveys were fielded using Survey Monkey™ to ensure a confidential, easily accessible, inexpensive, and rapid means of collecting and analyzing data. That tool was supplemented by telephone and email follow-ups to boost response rates.

Sub-grantee CSOs

The first survey targeted leaders of all CSOs (formal and informal) that had received sub-grants from Core Partners as part of the CSF Project. The survey explored how these CSO leaders viewed the financial support received, how the work of those CSOs and their beneficiaries has been affected, and how the sub-grants were administered, among other topics. Areas of inquiry included their perspectives on the usefulness of assistance received through the project, on the prospects for sustaining their organizations and activities, and on the priorities for future development of civil society in Serbia.

The CSO survey was drafted in English then translated into Serbian, both of which appeared in the final survey instrument in order to ease analysis and also allow respondents to consult both languages in case of unclear terminology. The survey questions were mostly closed-ended, thus minimizing the need for translating responses. The survey questions can be found in Annex F.

⁵ Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis, Zajecar, Leskovac, Novi Pazar, and Prijepolje

The total sample size for this survey was 164 CSOs based in towns and cities across the country, using contact information provided by ISC, Trag Foundation and Civic Initiatives. The lists from ISC included sub-grantees of several Core Partners. Responses were obtained from 112 CSOs, which translates into a 68 percent response rate. Among the respondents, 60.7 percent were female, 37.5 percent male and 1.8 percent of respondents indicated 'other.'

ISC Staff

The second survey was carried out amongst the 18 former staff members employed in Serbia by ISC on the CSF Project. The objective was to solicit their views on the strong and weak points of the Project, based on a variety of roles in the implementation of the Project, and seek their recommendations for future civil society programming in Serbia. Eight responses were received to the open-ended survey, which was in English only. This represents a response rate of 44 percent.

GROUP INTERVIEWS

The ET conducted seven group interviews with representatives of CSOs that had received sub-grants from a Core Partner of the Project. These discussions aimed to gather more in-depth qualitative information on their experience with the sub-grant projects, their interaction with the grant-making organizations and other CSOs involved in the Project, their sources of support, and their interactions with the government and other stakeholders.

The evaluation team held group interviews in Nis, Zajecar, Novi Pazar, Novi Sad, Leskovac and Prijepolje. Six discussions were implemented in Serbian and one in English with simultaneous translation, and note takers were present to assist at six of the meetings while the ET members facilitated the discussion. In all, 36 people participated, including 15 females, and 21 males.⁶ The questions used to guide these discussions are included in Annex C.

LIMITATIONS

As with all evaluations, there were certain limitations that affected data collection and analysis. Specific constraints in this case included the following.

1. Given that Phase I of the Project has ended, ISC no longer has offices or staff in Serbia, nor do they have dedicated staff in their Vermont headquarters. While this did not ultimately pose any problems in terms of contacting and securing interviews with key staff, there were some delays in responding to document requests and some difficulties in determining which staff member had knowledge of a certain issue.
2. The Project was designed to support the transition from programming largely channeled through a US-based organization to a model based on direct funding of Serbian CSOs and other entities by the USAID mission. The evaluation was tasked with commenting on USAID management systems in relation to this ongoing transition process, but since Phase Two grants had only recently been signed, there was limited information on how the direct funding element was working.
3. Although very few informants declined to participate in the evaluation, there is a possibility of *selection* bias, i.e. those respondents who chose to participate might differ from those who did not in terms of their attitudes and perceptions, socio-demographic characteristics and experience, among other factors. In mitigation, the Team ensured that informants were made aware of the independence of the process and the confidentiality of their responses.
4. There is a known tendency among respondents to under-report socially undesirable answers and alter their responses to approximate what they perceive as the social norm (*halo* bias). The extent to which

⁶ There was some overlap of informants, as some individuals participated in both interviews in Prijepolje, and in two cases, a key informant interview subject also participated in the group discussion.

respondents are prepared to reveal their true opinions may also vary for some questions that call upon respondents to assess the performance of their colleagues or people on whom they depend for the provision of services or funding. To mitigate this limitation, the Team provided respondents with confidentiality guarantees, conducted interviews in settings where respondents felt comfortable, and aimed to establish rapport between the interviewer and the respondent.

5. Differentiation of results and activities of the Project and its predecessor CSAI, which was also implemented by ISC, was problematic for some informants. To address this challenge, the Team clearly informed informants about the name and dates of the project being evaluated, and also reviewed documents related to CSAI in order to facilitate identification of cases of “mistaken identity”.
6. Because the Project’s structure involves several Serbian CSOs and the OCCS leading implementation of certain areas of activity, in addition to ISC’s much more significant intervention, some sub-grantees and other stakeholders were not aware of the CSF Project as such, of USAID as its donor, or of ISC’s role. This required extra attention when inviting informants to participate in the evaluation, in order to ensure that informants understood why they were being contacted and which activities were of relevance to the evaluation.
7. Many interviewed informants did not have any knowledge of the USAID support to the OCCS, and it proved difficult to identify available national government officials outside the OCCS itself. However, the evaluation was able to collect sufficient data by meeting with key staff of the Office and soliciting the views of relevant USAID staff, local government officials, civil society experts, and CSOs.
8. Given the time constraints on data collection, it proved difficult to arrange individual and group interviews with all of the desired informants, particularly in the regions outside of Belgrade. By the time the Work Plan was finalized and relevant contact information obtained from the implementers, there were only a few days available to try to arrange meetings. In some locations, this resulted in low levels of participation in group interviews with sub-grantees, and did not allow for suitable local government officials to be identified and contacted.
9. As noted in the Project Background, the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) for the ISC component of CSF was found to have serious weaknesses, especially in the definition of indicators and baselines, and therefore was of limited usefulness in terms of assessing results of the Program. It was not possible to clearly identify and attribute changes in Core Partner organizational capacity due to the lack of baseline data and consistent methods.

FINDINGS

PROGRESS TOWARDS EXPECTED RESULTS

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent has CSF achieved, or is on track to achieving the expected results identified in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD)?

ADVOCACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Expected Results:

- Revitalized civil society engagement in public decision-making
- Strengthened advocacy capacity of civil society organizations
- Expanded range of strategies and tactics involved in advocacy efforts

Phase One of CSF promoted advocacy on key issues at national, regional, and local levels primarily through three types of grants under the ISC-led component: nine major Core Partner advocacy grants awarded by ISC valued at just over \$1 million; and 21 Community Advocacy sub-grants awarded by Trag Foundation totaling \$292,628. In addition, 64 smaller Active Communities sub-grants awarded by Trag and ZI were

used to support civic activism, sometimes including local advocacy. The pilot direct grants given by USAID to three CSOs also included significant elements advocacy and civic activism. These grant projects have been executed by CSOs of varying sizes and types in a broad range of subject areas including good governance, human rights, community development, and social services. Training and mentoring were provided in varying degrees to sub-grantees, to assist in their advocacy and activism work.

Findings

With respect to the advocacy grants made to Core Partners, most funded activities focused on preparatory efforts rather than full-blown advocacy campaigns. As the ISC final report said: *“Assuming that they made a strong case for their longer-term strategy, grantees were not pushed to achieve ‘quick wins’ or achieve policy change during the grant period.”* Due to delays at the outset of this component, these projects only lasted 14-16 months. Two of these grant projects were not notably focused on advocacy (Divac Foundation and Smart Kolektiv), and most were found to be continuations or expansions of pre-existing campaigns.

Informants and Project documents described a few national level policies or laws that were changed following advocacy led by the Core Partners, such as inclusion of provisions related to the Internet in the new media law and adoption of the Council of Europe’s *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*. This is an important achievement, since application of the Convention should contribute to important improvements in support to victims of such violence. The work on the policy level was strengthened by other tools, such as the Android application “Safe” (a tool for victims to contact assistance providers) and 10 well-disseminated educational video clips.

Core Partners reported that advocacy activities contributed to improvement of their image with citizens through outreach campaigns, and three of those interviewed stated that they had gained recognition with influential stakeholders in the government. However, it was recognized by all interviewed informants that Core Partner advocacy did not result in the kind of significant policy outcomes that had been achieved during the predecessor project; a number of grantees focused their efforts on research and documentation work to lay the foundations for future efforts to influence policy.

Core Partners and ISC staff pointed out the challenges faced by these grantees in dedicating sufficient time to planning and implementation of advocacy work while they were also engaged in intensive capacity building. Most Core Partners do not have large leadership teams, therefore the same people were being pulled in different directions. All Core Partners assessed themselves as having “improved advocacy capacity” according to the PMEP results and ISC reports, but there was little solid evidence found to corroborate those views. In terms of advocacy strategies and tactics, various informants from ISC and the Core Partners felt that engaging a professional public relations company helped the Core Partners to gain greater visibility for their campaigns, and the company also provided some limited capacity building. Many forms of advocacy communications were used within the projects, including slightly increased use of social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), and one Core Partner invented a new computer game to promote awareness of police corruption.

At the municipal level, there were some notable advocacy achievements. For example, Trag Foundation reported that sub-grants under their pilot grant project enabled five CSOs to successfully influence their respective municipalities (Subotica, Belgrade, Mali Idjos, Brus, and Babusnica) to ensure sustainability of social care services and transparent procedures of funding those services. The amounts are small but represent a good step forward in cooperation between CSOs and local governments in social service provision. Trag reported that 10 of the 21 Community Advocacy sub-grantees achieved their advocacy objectives under the ISC component.

When it comes to civic activism, the evaluation team found that CSF-funded initiatives had encouraged greater citizen participation in decision making processes at the local level, while also boosting the visibility of CSOs working in those communities. Organizations supported by Trag’s Active Communities and Community Advocacy programs engaged over 60,000 citizens in civic initiatives, according to Trag’s reports—including 10,000 citizens being involved in local advocacy. In addition, sub-grants made by Civic

Initiatives through its pilot grant from USAID boosted civic participation by youth in particular, and interviewees reported that they had resulted in positive tangible changes in targeted communities.

ISC reports that they supported 26 advocacy initiatives with a gender-based focus during the Project (Indicator #8 of the PMEP). Trag provided capacity building support to 12 CSOs for advocacy, whereby 24 representatives (20 women and 4 men) acquired knowledge on advocacy. Different initiatives by Core Partners and sub-grantees engaged large numbers of young women and men in local communities. In addition, Civic Initiatives activities under its pilot grant paid strong attention to gender, location, and ethnic diversity, ensuring that voices of (young) women, particularly from rural areas were heard. Slightly more women than men participated in their Youth Build activities in both Sandzak and South Serbia regions.

Sub-grantees noted that the civic activism funding was generally very short in duration, which limited their effectiveness, but the small influx of resources allowed them to attract new volunteers and gain some recognition from local government and citizens. According to the evaluation's survey, 64 percent of sub-grantees believed their projects would continue to have benefits for the communities three years from now. However, surveyed sub-grantees uniformly pointed to longer term financial support as being a major challenge for the continued work of grassroots organizations.

Conclusions

Overall, progress in CSO engagement and capacity in advocacy under the CSF Project was mixed. Given the time constraints (exacerbated by a slow startup phase), the expectations for Core Partner advocacy were probably unrealistically high—at least from USAID's side. There seemed to be differing opinions between USAID and ISC about the relative importance to be placed on the competing priorities of capacity building and advocacy work by the Core Partners. While ISC strove to introduce innovative tools for capacity building, USAID was looking for concrete policy influence on the national level. Core Partners themselves seemed to prioritize the work on capacity building—perhaps because they knew that eligibility for USAID funding hinged on them being able to meet very specific internal capacity targets. Despite the short duration of grants and other demands on their time, most Core Partners succeeded at least in bringing issues to the agenda of the government and building relationships both inside and outside the country for the longer term. Advocacy efforts contributed to the fight against gender based violence, and a range of civic activism initiatives included both (young) women and men and helped empower them to take more proactive roles in their communities.

Important challenges lay ahead for CSOs in Serbia in their advocacy efforts on national and local levels. Civil society still struggles with establishing widespread credibility with the general population as well as with government, which is a legacy of the complex history and geopolitics of the region. These obstacles will not be overcome without sustained efforts based on a long-term strategy for the sector.

The civic participation-focused interventions of CSF Phase One (both ISC component and direct grants) had considerable impact in many communities across the country, and was an important mechanism for engaging with non-formal groups at the grassroots level. The local civic actions were short-term but included a variety of end beneficiaries, and they exposed thousands of people to concepts of voluntarism, philanthropy, and community mobilization, besides the tangible benefits for community infrastructure such as play areas and renovation of various public premises. However, these actions were small scale and in most cases there was no time or resources for the grant-maker to follow up or provide additional support to promote sustainability of the groups.

CSO CAPACITY

Expected Result: Enhanced CSO management capacity and financial sustainability

Findings

The primary target of CSF in relation to CSO management capacity and financial sustainability was the 11 Core Partners, and to a lesser extent the six HRSI grantees. The evaluation team found that the provision of

generous grant funding (\$30,000 each) to the Core Partners represented an unusual opportunity for those organizations to devote significant resources to strengthening internal capacities, providing “a chance to invest in the organization itself”, as some described it. That chance was highly valued by the Core Partners, which consistently cited the capacity building enabled by CSF as their most important achievement—and in fact the most valuable element of Phase One of the Project.

Core Partners and ISC staff highlighted the usefulness of the two main capacity assessment tools used by CSF: 1) the mock pre-award survey conducted by ISC that focused on finance and administration systems and procedures, and 2) the STAR (System for Transformation and Results) self-assessment process led by ISC sub-contractor Root Change. The mock pre-award survey (PAS) helped to pinpoint areas for change in order for the organizations to qualify for direct grant funding from USAID.⁷ Informants from ISC and several Core Partners saw that process as extremely helpful, and believed that it contributed to the fact that all Core Partners were able to pass the PAS carried out in mid-2014 by USAID personnel. Although NUPAS is not designed to be a tool for measuring change in capacity of organizations over time, nor is its use prescriptive for implementing agencies, it could have been useful in that respect if the tools used had been the same. However, since the instruments and scoring systems used for the mock and the “real” PAS conducted later by USAID were different, the fact of them passing the NUPAS could not be considered as objective evidence of any change in capacity of the Core Partners as a result of the Project.

The STAR self-assessment was highly valued by the Core Partners (with only one exception), who especially appreciated their ability to drive the process and identify their own priorities. Unfortunately, ISC-led attempts to measure change in capacity following the initial assessments (including Root Change’s so-called “STAR Index”) were fraught with difficulties in methodology and timing, and ultimately did not produce reliable data.

The Core Partners pointed to changes in their organizations’ capacities that included: improved financial, procurement, and administrative procedures; better human resources management; creation of communications plans; new information technology systems; and documented funding strategies. Since each organization decided its own priorities, the results were very diverse. Most Core Partners and ISC staff felt that the duration of the Project constrained the results in capacity building; Core Partners had minimal time to reflect on learning and changes already made before having to launch the next process. As well, there was pressure for the organizations to spend a fixed amount of funds, or lose them, which led to some rushed decision-making.⁸ One Core Partner admitted that it had invested most of the time and funds in building certain capacities (mostly internal procedures) with a view to getting an APS grant from USAID, but their own capacity building priorities would have been different.

ISC introduced another tool specifically aimed at enhancing financial sustainability of the Core Partners and HRSI grantees. An international consultant facilitated the Sustainability Roadmap process with three Core Partners, who reported that it was very useful. However, the process could not be completed with other Partners due to time constraints and the fact that the organizations did not have current strategic plans to

⁷ Although it is not clear whether a formal request was ever made, ISC staff reported that USAID/Serbia seemed reluctant to share full details about the “official” PAS tool (Non-US organization Pre-award Survey or NUPAS), in order to allow ISC to use the same tool as its starting point. ISC reported having been refused the tool by another USAID mission, and on that basis, they understood that it was not publicly available. Therefore, ISC came up with their own methodology based on information about the NUPAS gleaned from other sources, although USAID/Serbia staff did offer feedback on the tool. Research by the evaluation team indicates that the NUPAS is in fact a public document, but during the period of the evaluation, the links to the tool that appear in the ADS 303 Guidelines were not functional, nor could it be located by extended searching of the Internet. The evaluation team was unable to obtain the tool from USAID.

⁸ Some of the activities that Core Partners chose to prioritize with this funding could be questioned as capacity building (one hired a consultant to help prepare the concept paper for the first APS round in 2014), but the evaluation did not have time to analyze all of the funded interventions.

serve as the basis for sustainability planning. The consultant did train several staff of Trag Foundation in mid-2013 so they would be able to facilitate the tool with the remaining partners (and other CSOs), but it appears that the process did not advance further with the Core Partners.

Gender was a key topic in initial group training workshops on advocacy, organized by ISC for both Core Partners and later for the HRSI grantees. Thereafter, project records on capacity building did not mention the subject, and interviewed Core Partners did not highlight this as an area of particular progress.

Although the evaluation did not have time or resources to closely investigate or analyze the effects of the capacity building provided by Trag, Civic Initiatives, and other Core Partners to their sub-grantees, both grant-making organizations and sub-grantees commented positively on the support during group and individual interviews. Among the surveyed sub-grantees, 60 percent indicated they had received training from their grant provider, and 47 percent mentioned mentoring support. The view of 88 percent of respondents regarding the technical assistance provided during their projects was either very positive or positive. Sub-grantees that received training from the grant-maker were much more likely to indicate definite improvement in a range of areas of organizational capacity, as compared to those that did not receive training. More details on this finding can be found in Annex F, which contains more in-depth analysis of the survey data.

Looking at the usefulness of the sub-grant to the organization itself, 78 percent stated it was very useful, and 21.1 percent useful. Over 88 percent of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with all areas of interaction with the grant-maker (financial support, technical assistance and capacity building, and the relationship in general). With respect to changes in the organizations since the receipt of the sub-grant support, the rating by respondents is generally high in all areas related to organization strengthening, profile and advocacy. On the other hand, changes were seen as either low or non-existent in relation to funding (from government, business, and citizens), relationships with government and involvement in networks. Most respondents (60 percent) considered it very likely that the positive changes achieved through the sub-grant would be sustained, and another 29 percent thought it somewhat likely. With respect to the needs of Serbian civil society, 39 percent of those surveyed highlighted needs related to financial support and sustainability, while 19 percent mentioned capacity building.

With respect to the APS grant recipients, USAID is providing a certain amount of capacity support, focused on internal systems and procedures of the organizations. The pre-award survey is carried out with each grantee, and several reported that this intensive review process had been useful in identifying areas for improvement. Although no further engagement is required if the survey recommendations are fulfilled, USAID staff are also available to provide advice with respect to handling changes in either government or USAID regulations, etc.

Conclusions

Whether or not it was intended as such, the capacity building component was the “flagship” of the CSF project in the view of most informants. Targeted CSOs thought highly of some of the methods and new tools introduced by ISC, notably the STAR self-assessment and mock pre-award survey, and the Sustainability Roadmap also appears to have good potential. There is considerable subjective evidence to show that the Core Partners made significant progress in their internal capacities, although objective data is somewhat lacking due to problematic measurement tools and lack of clear indicators. On the other hand, piloting a number of new methods in a short period of time placed a significant burden on the ISC team and on the CSOs, especially as most of these processes were very time-consuming for senior management of the organizations. Some of the methods, such as “STARNET” (discussed under Linkages) simply did not bear fruit, and thus wasted precious time of key staff.

Bundling of financial and technical support for capacity building together with funding for program activities of each CSO was appropriate, although expectations for results in each area need to take into account that the same personnel will in most cases be involved in internal change processes and programmatic work—in addition to other program activities they may have going on. The amounts allocated for the capacity building

grants were too rigidly based on a fixed amount, rather than being adapted to the needs of each CSO based on a clear plan of action. At the grassroots level of sub-grantees, there is evidence from the sub-grantees' point of view that training and information provision are making a real difference to the development of those organizations, even though they continue to face serious sustainability challenges.

LINKAGES, COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Expected Results:

- Stronger, more effective linkages within civil society, and between CSOs and citizens
- Improved and deepened partnerships with local civil society and governmental actors
- Consolidation of a core group of strengthened coalitions of CSOs, both urban and rural that are organized around regional or issue-specific hubs, capable of more effectively defining core mandates advocating for common issues with local authorities, donors and constituencies
- Partnerships developed between CSOs, media and think tanks supportive of advocacy, outreach and analysis of the sector with refined messaging and public outreach skills

Findings

I. CSO-CSO Linkages, including coalition building

ISC-led efforts to stimulate CSO networking primarily targeted Core Partners, and were seen by them and ISC staff as having had modest effect during CSF Phase One. Trainings and other events organized by ISC regularly brought together the Core Partners (and in Year 2, the HRSI grantees), and ISC staff and Core Partners stated that these interactions resulted in some closer links among those organizations. Several Core Partners mentioned relationships that had been initiated or strengthened as a result, and the ISC final project report refers to several concrete collaborations that flowed from this “organic peer exchange” process.

One Core Partner informant summed up the view that emerged from various Core Partners that: “*Each partner was selected for their own sector, and they stayed in those boxes for the most part.*” The existing relationship between Trag Foundation and Zajecar Initiative continued through this project and became closer, and Trag is now playing a mentor role with some other regional organizations, such as Atelier Association in Southwest Serbia, including support to formation of new community foundations. Generally, Trag did not interact significantly with the other Core Partners, given their very different role in the Project, and there was evidence of rivalry with at least two Core Partners that seemed to impede information and experience sharing.

ISC’s attempt to introduce a high-tech tool to assist in networking and promote collaborative efforts did not gain much traction. Despite the significant time devoted by ISC contractor Root Change to develop the STARNET network mapping, and some initial interest in the mapping, use of the tool never caught on with the Core Partners or other stakeholders that were exposed to it. KIs with ISC staff and Core Partners, as well as the ET’s own review of related documents, indicate that the tool and methodology was overly technical and complex.

One coalition was selected as a Core Partner: the National Coalition for Decentralization. Project reports and KI data indicate that they and at least four other Core Partners did notable outreach with other CSOs as part of their work funded by CSF, including sharing of some capacity building methods. However, some Core Partners (such as Divac Foundation) did not have robust pre-existing networks to which they could spread their new skills and knowledge, which limited their ability to act as sectoral leaders and mentors to other CSOs.

Moreover, a coalition of media organizations was supported with one of the pilot direct grants from USAID, and its members give significant credit to that grant project for helping the coalition stay afloat and continue to work on issues of common concern. The coalition is now carrying out a new project to push for implementation of new media law. One new coalition emerged from the project, according to reports and

interviews with Core Partners; the PREUGOVOR coalition on monitoring of Chapters 23 (judicial system and fundamental human rights) and 24 (justice, freedom, and security) of the Accession Agreement with the EU was spearheaded by one Core Partner (BCSP) and includes at least one HRSI grantee, as well as various other CSOs.

Sub-granting formed the basis for some new links between Core Partners engaged in this activity and the smaller organizations that received sub-grants, although it is not clear whether those ties will be sustained. The evaluation team found that the Project had some limited effect on links and collaboration among sub-grantee CSOs; 49 percent of survey respondents said they “definitely” had stronger connections with other CSOs, while 33 percent said those connections were a little better.

Participants in the group interview held in Zajecar indicated ZI had facilitated cooperation among organizations in Eastern Serbia, and informants in Leskovac said they had met other CSOs from the area at meetings organized by Trag in relation to their sub-granting activities.

2. CSO – Government Relations

Interviews with a variety of informants (including CSOs, donors, and ISC) indicated the general attitude of Serbian government officials towards civil society is still extremely wary and vice versa. Although some patchy progress has been observed in recent years, there continues to be significant mistrust at both local and national levels, which was exacerbated just before the evaluation began by public statements by senior government officials. With respect to the Core Partners supported by CSF, interviews with ISC staff and those Core Partners show for the most part, pre-existing linkages with government bodies were simply continued under the Project. However, it should be noted that CRTA was able to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding to continue its Open Parliament initiative with the new parliament, and the media coalition led by the Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (popularly known its Serbian acronym “NUNS”) forged new collaborative relations with two Ministries at the national level through its direct grant-funded media literacy project.

The series of consultations on preparing a National Strategy for Development of Civil Society, organized by the OCCS primarily with CSF funding, were considered by informants from OCCS, USAID, and local government to be a useful platform for bringing together representatives of Local Self-Governments (LSG) and CSOs from the same area for open discussion of issues of shared concern. Several key informants expressed the view that although there is considerable reluctance on the parts of LSG officials and CSOs to interact in a meaningful way, once they are in fact brought together (usually by external forces), useful interaction often happens. The National Strategy consultations, combined with the training organized by OCCS for LSG officials from across the country on how to cooperate with civil society, served to strengthen links between OCCS and LSGs. This should help the OCCS to play a stronger liaison role between CSOs and local government going forward.

The evaluation team found considerable evidence in project documents and interviews with CSOs that community improvement and advocacy projects funded by sub-grants, primarily through Trag, ZI, and other Core Partners, had contributed to linkages of locally based civil society groups with both government bodies and citizens in their immediate areas. Sub-grant funding for tangible community projects (64 sub-grants within the Trag and Timok Active Communities programs alone) provided the impetus for CSOs to reach out to their constituencies and local authorities for help, financial and otherwise, to carry out projects with a direct positive impact on local communities. Similarly, the Youth Banks organized by Divac Foundation as well as the YouthBuild project of Civic Initiatives funded by direct grant from USAID were reported to have a positive effect on collaboration between local governments, civil society, and youth. Some LSGs were pleased to have productive ways of spending the budget allocated to youth, other than sports teams, and expressed willingness to continue their support. However, interviewed and surveyed sub-grantees voiced concerns about the lack of transparency and access to funds allocated by local government bodies, and the survey results showed little or no perceived improvement in relations with government authorities.

3. CSO – Other parties (citizens, media, think tanks, etc.)

Key informants and ISC reports indicate that a moderate level of media coverage was achieved in relation to Project-supported activities, especially through social media channels. A public relations firm engaged by ISC assisted the Core Partners and ISC itself to organize public events and publicize their work in general, but there was no indication that direct connections were strengthened between the CSOs on the one hand and media outlets and journalists on the other. One of the Core Partners was Share Foundation, which is working closely with digital media journalists and bloggers in Serbia to ensure their rights to free expression are protected. Project funding helped Share, as a relatively young organization, to expand and deepen its contacts with digital media stakeholders and with other CSOs working on human rights issues. Although the NUNS was a direct grantee of USAID as part of CSF and is a key player in the media sector, project documents and interviews with NUNS and USAID staff show they had no links to the ISC component nor with the Core Partners (other than pre-existing contacts).

As noted above, community projects funded by a wide range of CSF sub-grants contributed to enhanced or expanded contacts between CSOs and informal groups with citizens in their immediate areas. In some cases, the private business sector also engaged in supporting those community actions.

Conclusions

Generally, CSO-CSO linkages were improved to some extent among Core Partners and HRSI grantees, but what could be seen as a centerpiece activity in this area, STARNET, proved to be ineffectual. The reach of the ISC-led component and engagement of a wider cross-section of civil society was not as extensive as anticipated in its design; this was probably mostly due to the lack of strong networks (formal or otherwise) of some Core Partners and by the time pressures that affected ISC and Core Partner staff as they strove to meet various commitments to capacity building, advocacy, etc. The project did not significantly affect coalitions and formal networks of CSOs unless they were Core Partners or direct grantees themselves, and no major new joint initiatives emerged as a result of the project. However, the continued operation of the media coalition was an important outcome of USAID support.

As several informants commented, civil society in Serbia is already in a sort of “survival mode” as international donor support has been shrinking. This will unfortunately not be conducive to networking and cooperation among CSOs, especially those that are direct competitors as the most prominent organizations in the country.

Some progress in CSO-government relations has been made in smaller communities by virtue of community improvement initiatives that united CSOs, citizens, and local officials around practical problems of common interest. These may ultimately provide an impetus for ongoing interaction and joint decision-making, but there is a concern that if no further funding can be secured, these could be “one-off” activities with no further impact. Based on interviews and the survey of sub-grantees, the perception remains strong among CSOs that most state funds go to long-established organizations that are closely linked to the government but not very effective or only working on humanitarian issues. Little progress has been made on transparency of state funding of CSOs so far, which is a big obstacle to improved relations on national and local levels.

The CSF project did not particularly emphasize linkages between CSOs and the media and the ET noted little progress. Media exposure and public relations are major areas of weakness for even the most prominent CSOs, as discussed below in relation to public perceptions of civil society. Overall, there was no real evidence of any new “Partnerships developed between CSOs, media and think tanks supportive of advocacy, outreach and analysis of the sector with refined messaging and public outreach skills”.

GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Expected Results:

- Host-country capacity to develop and implement civil society assistance
- Enhanced, progressive governmental cooperation, policies and legislation supporting the civil society sector

Findings

As noted in the Project Description, USAID contributed just over \$200,000 to support the staffing and operations of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, as part of the CSF Project. The OCCS is the main institutional mechanism for offering support for the development of dialogue between the Government of Serbia and CSOs. The Office offers support to Government institutions in understanding and recognizing the roles of CSOs in decision-making processes. The overall objective of USAID support was to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society in Serbia and align it with relevant European norms and practices. The two areas of focus were strengthening the civil society enabling environment through a consultative process, and building capacity of the Serbian government to implement a National Strategy for Development of Civil Society.

This project was only the second occasion on which USAID directly funded the Serbian government, with the first support arrangement starting only a few months earlier. Informants on both sides reported there was a learning curve as rules and procedures were communicated and clarified, and certain delays were incurred as a result of normal bureaucracy (including an appeal lodged by an unsuccessful applicant for the position of Project Manager caused major delays in recruitment that affected some activities). Originally scheduled for 18 months to end August 2015, at the time of data collection an extension was under discussion to allow additional time for activities to be completed.

Generally, civil society representatives had a very positive view of the OCCS, and most felt the Office staff was very responsive and supportive of civil society. Interviewed CSOs and experts located outside Belgrade raised concerns with respect to how well the Office communicated with CSOs that did not have ready access to Internet, although their use of social media was seen positively.

The *National Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2015-2019* represents the first document of its kind in Serbia, and thus the process of its creation is of significant importance to civil society, and for the Office as the lead coordinating body. Funds from USAID made possible a series of consultative meetings with local self-government and civil society representatives across the country, centered on the first draft of the Strategy. Those consultations in late 2014 were seen by interviewed CSOs in particular as an important contribution to the inclusion of interested parties in various locations in national policy-making. Informants described the consultations as well facilitated and attended (with the exception of Novi Pazar). Experts and OCCS staff noted that many recommendations were later integrated in the second draft of the Strategy and the related Action Plan. After a period of apparent limbo related to the resignation of the Office Director, the draft is now scheduled to be presented for approval by the Cabinet in September 2015.

CSF supported training for local government officials as a second major activity. The foundation for this activity was the "Guidelines for Inclusion of Civil Society Organizations in the Regulation Adoption Process" adopted by the Serbian government in August 2014. The European Union supported the development of the Guidelines and they are based on European practices. They define how civil society should be able to participate in the processes of preparing, adopting, and monitoring the implementation of regulations at national and local government levels. The ten workshops co-funded by USAID and EU-TACSO Serbia in early 2015 aimed to raise awareness of officials from municipalities across the country of these Guidelines, and also included a major focus on transparent funding of civil society from local government budgets.

The training events were fairly well attended, according to the organizers and reports, even if some participants were not the most relevant officials, and the activity was evaluated positively by participants as well as interviewed local government officials. On the other hand, CSOs active in the regions commented that the local governments in their areas were either not following the Guidelines mentioned above, or doing so only on a "pro forma" basis. Moreover, they opined that most LSGs are still using non-transparent methods to fund CSOs, which tend to be either the same ones each year, or in some more infamous cases, organizations that appear to be created solely for the purposes of securing government funds. The evaluation team noted that the Office does not have any authority to compel government bodies to change their bylaws or practices for

engaging with CSOs, and thus the effect of these activities may be limited without additional political support for widespread reform.

CSF supported the development of a “CSO Map” as the third major initiative. From an original vision that was fairly modest, the Map is now envisaged as a tool providing visual display of the entire range of Serbian CSOs – their thematic areas of activity, location, capacity, and contact information. The platform will enable the general public, public administration, CSOs, and others to establish contacts, and act as a tool for project partner search or support (both ways – CSOs seeking support for a particular action, and donors and companies looking for an activity or organization to support). This ambitious interactive platform was still in the testing phase at the time of data collection, and some informants among CSOs and donors were skeptical about its utility and acceptance by the CSO community.

In relation to the legal and policy framework for CSOs in Serbia, the main initiative during Phase One of CSF was the above-described work on the National Strategy, which should set the agenda for amendments to other legislation and regulations as it is rolled out. Some minor changes to legislation and regulations were adopted during Phase One of CSF, but with little connection to the Project’s support for the OCCS and civil society organizations that are advocating in this area, such as Civic Initiatives.

Generally, informants from CSOs and civil society experts consider the Law on Associations and Law on Endowments and Foundations to be modern laws that provide a framework for not-for-profit organizations. The Law on Volunteering and amendments on various tax laws since 2012 have also contributed to regulating the CSO legal environment. A new Law on Accounting has set out simplified and adapted procedures for CSOs, as of 2014. However, there is still work to be done, according to legal experts: first, existing legislation is not yet adapted as to recognize changes introduced by the Law on Associations and Law on Endowments and Foundations. As well, tax laws (both taxation and tax incentives) are largely not regulated favorably for not-for-profits. CSOs with support from the OCCS initiated a proposal for changes to the Corporate Profit Tax Law and the Property Tax Law in November 2014, but so far it has not been adopted. A harmonized and unique definition of the concept of public interest is still missing, which results in unequal tax treatment of both associations as receivers of funds from various donors and donors themselves (organizations and companies) which donate funds to associations working in different areas.

Conclusions

Support to the OCCS by USAID coincided with EU funding for the Office, which offered an opportunity for synergies and thus stronger donor aid effectiveness. The OCCS and both donors succeeded in an effective collaboration over the course of 18 months. The outputs supported by the CSF Project (trainings, consultative meetings, study visits for OCCS staff, and other events) have made a contribution to the visibility and credibility of the Office, which is still a very young part of the government. The trainings in particular were an opportunity for the OCCS to strengthen its ties with LSGs from across the country, and lay the foundation for continued liaison and sharing. Most importantly, the consultative process around the National Strategy resulted in a draft that reflects the inputs of various stakeholders from both government and civil society. This may ultimately enhance feelings of ownership and commitment to implementation of the Strategy.

The OCCS faces multiple challenges as the national focal point for government-civil society interaction. Since its inception, the Office has been at the heart of competing expectations from the government, CSOs, and donors. CSOs consider the Office as their “extended hand”, while the Government sees it (rightly) as their institutional mechanism. The donors harbor their own expectations of what the Office should prioritize and how it should react to problems affecting government-CSO relations. The OCCS is still relatively weak as an institution, having succeeded so far largely on the strength of an individual leader who had well-developed contacts on both sides of the table; following her departure, it is facing a transition and many informants are unsure of its future. These issues are critical for the next phase of OCCS’s work and also for sustaining the momentum and achievements enabled by USAID’s support.

Although modest progress has been made on the civil society enabling environment in recent years, the legal framework in Serbia remains far from ideal for the further development of the sector, especially in relation to

financial sustainability. In the context of declining donor investment, it will be crucial to lay a solid foundation for mutually beneficial collaborative relations between the government entities and CSOs, including systems for transparent and accountable grant-making at local and national government levels. Political will for genuine reform will be essential to consolidation of both the OCCS and the legal framework.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Expected Result: Improved public perceptions of CSOs and their coalitions which can be capitalized upon for increased constituencies, successful advocacy campaigns and financial support.

Findings

Based on analysis of several sources, it appears that general public perception of civil society organizations in Serbia has improved slightly in the last several years (although attribution of change to the CSF Project is not possible). The *2013 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, published by USAID in June 2014, shows the score for Public Image for 2013 was 4.4, a marginal improvement over the score of 4.5 assigned in both 2011 and 2012. This was still the poorest score among the nine so-called “southern tier” of countries covered by the Index, which averaged 3.7. The report stated that “*The public image of CSOs has improved. In previous years, the public image of the sector was dominated by a few leaders of human rights organizations. With the increased visibility of grassroots organizations, the public now recognizes that the sector includes various initiatives that help improve the lives of citizens.*”⁹ Data collected by the evaluation team from Core Partners, other CSOs, and sub-grantees was consistent with that statement. However, it is not possible to assess the extent to which this change may be due to the Project’s activities.

According to interviewed informants from CSOs and ISC, the credibility of certain individual organizations significantly improved during the Project period, including in relation to flood relief efforts, but there has been limited spillover to other CSOs. Widely publicized scandals in relation to alleged misuse of funds and critiques of CSOs by high-level officials continue to undermine the image of the entire sector. Media experts, donors, and CSOs themselves commented that the public communications skills of CSOs are still poorly developed, with many favoring the use of sector-specific language that is not readily understood by either journalists or the public. Informants indicated there had been no perceptible change in this tendency, including among CSF Core Partners and HRSI grantees. One surveyed sub-grantee summed up the situation in smaller communities as follows: “*The community does not recognize clearly the role of CSOs, but the CSOs have a role in this as often they do not send a clear message about their role and work.*” Links between the media sector and civil society are not generally close, as further elaborated in the section on Linkages and Collaboration.

The CSO Sustainability Index echoes this finding: “*CSOs’ public relations practices are still weak. Even when CSO activities are covered by the media, the information published is often incomprehensible...The use of Internet resources and social media mitigates these shortcomings to some extent, allowing CSOs to deliver their messages to wider audiences.*”¹⁰ Outside of Belgrade and other major cities, CSOs including CSF sub-grantees and local government officials took the view that public perception is highly variable, and largely depends on the activities that specific CSOs have led or contributed to in each community.

The evaluation also noted the findings of the *Public Perception and Attitudes toward the NGO Sector in Serbia* report prepared by Pro Pozitiv research agency in August 2014, with funding from the CSF Project. The survey research among 1050 Serbian citizens found that only 8 percent of citizens believe NGOs are effective in solving problems in the country. A scant 12 percent of those surveyed believe NGOs are working in the best interests of society, slightly lower than in 2006 (14 percent) and 2009 (13 percent). The share of people with negative spontaneous association about NGOs was slightly higher (28 percent) than

⁹ *2013 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, USAID, June 2012, p. 190.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

those with positive associations (22 percent). It is interesting to note that spontaneous associations with "civil society organization" were found to be more positive / neutral in comparison to the term "NGO". That view was corroborated by interviewed informants, a number of whom mentioned that the change in branding of the sector from "NGO" to "CSO" had been beneficial in improving public attitudes.

Conclusions

Although findings on the degree of recent change are not entirely consistent among different sources, the evaluation team concluded that in spite of slight improvement, in Serbia, the sector as a whole continues to suffer from poor public perception. While progress has been made by some organizations, particularly those working in humanitarian relief during times of emergency, negative media coverage in relation to specific scandals continues to exert a strong influence on public opinion. A handful of CSO leaders, often associated with past political turmoil, still dominate the public image of the sector and this adversely affects views of the entire sector. CSOs themselves are partly to blame for this ongoing problem, as most do not allocate sufficient resources to external communications nor prioritize the cultivation of links with the media. They struggle to communicate effectively about their work in ways that are interesting and understandable to the general public. In the words of the consultant engaged by ISC to assist the HRSI grantees with sustainability planning, CSOs need to articulate a *"picture of the overall societal change (they are) trying to effect and a clear sense of how this will make people's lives better."*¹¹

Collaboration between CSOs, citizens, and government, especially on activities that produce tangible change at the community level, is one strategy that is showing positive results, and has potential to be scaled up for wider impact. Transparency among CSOs towards the public (regarding their finances, activities, donors, etc.) is still at a nascent stage, which leaves the door open for criticism and doubts among those who may wish to undermine the sector.

PROSPECTS FOR LOCAL PHILANTHROPY

Evaluation Question 2: How effective has CSF been in expanding the prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to support/sustain civil society activity, including for human rights and other politically sensitive groups?

Findings

Trag Foundation as a partner of ISC was the key implementer of the CSF strategy for improving prospects for local philanthropy, one of the core objectives of the Project. A primary focus of their efforts was on supporting small and medium-sized organizations to develop their fundraising skills and cultivate philanthropic giving in their respective communities or constituencies, by offering financial and technical assistance.

The **Successful Fundraising program** supported 22 organizations from 16 communities in efforts to fundraise for projects from local resources, predominantly companies and individuals. The total value of these sub-grants was just under \$100,000, and sub-grantees raised nearly \$80,000 from companies and individuals through various methods (including income generation activities).¹² It is notable that many projects were in fields not usually attractive to individual and corporate donors, such as culture and animal protection. According to data provided by Trag, most recipients have expressed interest to continue fundraising and develop their skills further, and some have already engaged in new initiatives. Trag reported that a change of practice to providing matching grants based on "first come first serve" basis had boosted the motivation of CSOs to achieve their fundraising goals faster and to be more focused in the implementation of their fundraising campaigns.

¹¹ Serbia Trip Report - HRSI, February 17-27, 2014, by Anne Travers, March 15, 2014, p. 5.

¹² Trag indicated in their final report that the amount raised was \$99,690.75, which is in fact the total of the sub-grants provided. Detailed lists of funds raised per sub-grantee provided by Trag to the evaluators add up to just under \$80,000. Therefore, we are using here the more conservative figure of the two.

The **Promising Philanthropy and Fundraising Practices Program** aimed to contribute to long term sustainability of CSOs and serve as a best practice model to civil society in Serbia. Five organizations received technical grants of \$10,000 to launch long-term fundraising mechanisms. Four out of five managed to source at least \$15,000 and thus earn program matching funds of \$30,000 each. In total, the sub-grantees within this Program raised just under \$70,000 from local sources, while receiving program funds of \$189,000.¹³ Trag staff considered this as a significant achievement, given that it was the first program of its kind in Serbia and that it coincided with the disastrous floods in May 2014. The organizations introduced new philanthropy practices such as sponsored race, club of friends, and giving circles, and in two cases set up innovative income generating activities. (One of the latter raised only about \$4000, but plans to continue to fundraise.) Based on responses from sub-grantees in the Successful Fundraising program, Trag plans to introduce peer learning and skill share workshops to this program also.

Funds were also raised through both donations and income generation activities by sub-grantees under other Trag programs, such as the Active Communities grants described in the section on Advocacy and Civic Activism as well as Social Services grants. Trag reports that globally, their sub-grantees raised resources valued at over \$420,000 from local sources (through donations from individuals, companies and local government, income generating activities, and volunteer labor).¹⁴

With the support of a CSF-funded consultant, in 2014 Trag launched the first major giving campaign for its Endowment Fund, as a key strategy for the sustainability of its grant-making and promotion of philanthropy in Serbia. Following these fundraising efforts and double match funding from the Mott Foundation, Trag reported that the Fund had reached \$330,000 by the end of CSF. Trag has been sharing its expertise with other civil society organizations, primarily smaller and mid-sized CSOs outside of Belgrade, and they have assisted in the creation of grant mechanisms within emerging community foundations in both Eastern Serbia and Sandzak. On the other hand, through interviews with Trag, ISC, and Core Partners the evaluation team found their interaction with other Core Partners was minimal and their grant-making and fundraising expertise was not shared in any systematic way with them.

Part of Trag's mandate under CSF was to continue mentoring Zajecar Initiative in its development as a grantmaker to community-based initiatives and a promoter of philanthropy in Eastern Serbia. Both Trag and ZI staff reported that CSF helped to deepen their partnership, and that ZI now had richer experience including with larger grants. ZI's final report estimated that over the course of its CSF grant, more than \$30,000 had been raised through individual, corporate, and state donations for community initiatives supported by ZI sub-grants. Having in mind the underdeveloped economy and culture of giving in the Timok Region, this was considered by Trag and ISC as an excellent result. Another significant result was the establishment of the StepForward Community Foundation by Zajecar Initiative, with the supportive oversight of Trag staff and an ISC-engaged consultant on sustainability. Trag and ZI see the foundation is as a means of strengthening the fundraising abilities of ZI and further promoting local philanthropy in the long term.

The Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation is strong in the area of diversification of its own funding sources, although the evaluation team found little evidence that they were sharing their successful practices with other organizations. Nevertheless, the Youth Banks supported by CSF funding were a very interesting initiative through which youth managed to raise resources at the local level to match grant funding. The Foundation is planning to replicate this activity in other areas with new funding, including a recently signed APS grant from USAID.

¹³ Trag's final report states this amount to be \$123,642.99, while the detailed listing of amounts raised by sub-grantees provided by Trag to the evaluators adds up to \$69,703.75.

¹⁴ The final report of ISC on the CSF Project indicated that this amount had been raised only through Trag's *philanthropy and fundraising focused* grant programs, which was incorrect. This figure is cumulative for all Trag sub-grants supported by CSF, and includes the value of volunteer work as well as actual income generated and donations received.

As shown by the experience of the sub-grants described above, citizens and businesses are supporting community projects for the first time in many communities, largely due to the inputs and stimulation provided by the CSF Project implementers. However, the sub-grants and related activities were not seen by most surveyed sub-grantees to lead to significant changes in their fundraising prospects or diversification of funding sources. Local fundraising efforts faced a range of challenges experienced during CSF, including the economic downturn since 2009, which many informants indicated had influenced both individual and corporate giving, low public trust in CSOs, and minimal awareness of many citizens and businesses as to the work of CSOs. According to the *Monitoring Matrix On Enabling Environment For Civil Society Development: Country report Serbia 2014*, prepared by Civic Initiatives¹⁵, “the total amount of financial support offered to the civil society by the business sector is difficult to estimate, because there is still no systematic monitoring of corporate support.”

As noted above in the section of Government Capacity and Enabling Environment, the legal framework is not yet conducive to the development of philanthropy, nor for the engagement of CSOs in income generation activities. There is not yet a law adopted on Social Entrepreneurship (a draft floated in 2013 has since stalled), and provisions related to the application of value-added tax and income tax by CSOs are still not favorable, though proposed amendments are contained in the draft National Strategy for the Development of Civil Society. The Law on Endowments and Foundations passed in 2010 was a positive step, but has plenty of room for improvement.

Technical skills and knowledge in the realm of fundraising were inculcated to some extent among selected community-based and smaller organizations by the Trag Foundation sub-grant programs and technical support, and efforts are being made to share the lessons learned with other organizations to spread the benefits further. With respect to the Core Partners and HRSI grantees, there is no clear evidence that they have increased capacity in this area, and it is too early to judge whether the support they received under CSF will bear fruit in terms of diversification of funding sources. It appeared from interviews with ISC and document review that philanthropy and fundraising was not an area of focus with the Core Partners, perhaps in part because the Sustainability Roadmap was only completed with three of them.

More specifically looking at the HRSI grantees, USAID and ISC decided early on that CSF Project capacity building support would focus on sustainability. A specialist consultant was engaged to work with the six organizations in an effort to identify sustainability strategies and opportunities for diversification of funding sources. However, progress in this area is beset with multiple obstacles. For one, as the consultant reported following her work with the organizations: “*The groups are sensitive to the pressure imposed on them by their current donors to diversify and expand their donor universe – and seem highly motivated to do so. But they had almost no realistic sense of what new donor types could be successfully targeted and what would be required to engage, solicit, and sustain relationships with these new, more unfamiliar donors.*”¹⁶ In addition, she found that “*the groups tend to create fundraising materials that are jargon-filled, obscure, dull, and lacking in substantive detail*” and that “*most of the groups were not well positioned to seek funds from so-called “non-traditional” funding sources.*”

Interviewed informants (including donors, ISC staff, and CSOs) consistently stated that there had been little or no recent progress in the philanthropy and fundraising prospects of Serbian human rights organizations and other politically sensitive groups, in general. It is hard for such groups to get donations from local sources for various reasons. They are affected more than other CSOs by popular memory of certain prominent NGOs involved in regime change in Serbia. Many long-established human rights organizations are fairly disconnected from their constituencies, as was noted by the above-mentioned consultant, and tend to be more driven by donor priorities than by the concerns of the Serbian populace. Most grant-making by corporate donors in Serbia has not been wide enough to encompass issues related to human rights (although Erste Bank has funded some projects). In addition to general reluctance to fundraise in creative

¹⁵ Available at <http://udruzenja.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ENG.pdf>

¹⁶ Serbia Trip Report - HRSI, February 17-27, 2014, by Anne Travers, March 15, 2014, p. 2.

ways from outside their usual sources, the human rights organizations informed the evaluators they were very wary of seeking support from the private sector due to perceived differences in values, and their skills sets do not readily lend themselves to selling their services or other income generating activities.

That being said, the evaluation uncovered some examples of progress being made by some lower-profile human rights organizations, which suggest that there are indeed opportunities for CSOs in “sensitive sectors” of work. Examples include a women’s rights group that managed to get equipment donated for a hotline in Novi Sad, a Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights group that fundraised to set up a hostel in collaboration with other human rights groups, and an anti-human trafficking organization that secured a commitment from a construction company to donate 1 percent of its income and is also operating a bagel shop in Belgrade.

Conclusions

The Serbian heritage of central planning, inadequate development measures, corruption, and arbitrary interference of politics have all contributed to a prevailing atmosphere of distrust between the new post-socialist private sector, government, and CSOs. Serbian citizens primarily understand philanthropy as humanitarian aid, perhaps extending to assistance to socially vulnerable groups and individuals. This legacy has presented significant challenges as CSF Project implementers have worked to open up doors for philanthropy and alternative ways of financing civil society activities.

Generally, the evaluation has found that local philanthropy in Serbia is growing, but very slowly. In the succinct words of one informant, which summed up the view of many interviewees on this subject, securing donations from local sources has gone from: “not possible to maybe possible”. It continues to be much easier to attract individual and corporate donations for humanitarian causes and issues related to the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups. The floods in May 2014 generated a corresponding “flood” of donations, including from the significant diaspora, which on the one hand derailed some planned fundraising initiatives, but on the other hand gave the opportunity to several CSF Core Partners to raise their profiles and take an active role in promoting and channelling aid for the victims (even if that was not part of their mission).

In the area of stimulating individual and corporate philanthropy, the most notable results have been achieved through the activities of four Core Partners: Trag Foundation, Zajecar Initiative, Divac Foundation and Smart Kolektiv. Each has taken a different approach, but all have had an impact and generated important learning. Three of those partners are continuing their work along similar lines with fresh funding under the first round of APS grants. CSF made a contribution to the consolidation of two significant grant-making organizations (Trag and ZI) that have excellent potential to continue expanding prospects for philanthropy in Serbia – Trag on a national basis and ZI in Eastern Serbia. Positive precedents have been set by Trag, ZI, and Smart Kolektiv in terms of sharing knowledge and experience with others, which will be a key factor in determining whether the relatively small-scale wins produced thus far can be taken to a higher level across the country.

Re-granting or sub-granting has been an effective means for Trag, and to a lesser extent ZI, to stimulate local fundraising by small and mid-sized organizations in various communities, although the inputs of funds by the Project were still usually greater than the funds raised. The use of matching funds appears to have been particularly effective in motivating groups to be proactive in their fundraising, although more study should be carried out before definitive conclusions can be drawn about this practice. It is important that the grant-makers monitor closely to ensure that organizations are genuinely raising the funds (and using them for the intended purposes thereafter) they are reporting, since this could encourage groups to misrepresent the actual amount of funds committed in some cases.

Corporate awareness regarding financial support to CSOs has been raised to some extent, in part owing to CSF-supported initiatives, and also due to the example set by some international companies working in Serbia. Some companies (mostly the internationals) have developed systems and guidelines for a very organized approach to philanthropy based on corporate policy. More common are the companies that

provide money or other support on an ad hoc basis, as was seen with the major floods in May 2014. Changes to the legal enabling environment and ongoing efforts of organizations like Smart Kolektiv and Catalyst Foundation to bridge the gaps between the two sectors will be fundamental to the future of corporate social responsibility in Serbia.

A variety of small initiatives at the community level have opened up avenues of collaboration where none existed before, including in-kind support, and this may well have ripple effects as time goes on, especially if those initiatives can be replicated in other communities. However, the level of interaction between business and civil society sectors in Serbia is not yet at an adequate level to produce significant results. CSOs are still not engaged enough in important discussions, common projects, and initiatives with businesses on the local or national level. Business managers have yet to acknowledge civil society as a partner in the socio-economic development of the country, and there is considerable reticence on the side of civil society as well. An exacerbating factor is the current legal framework, which provides precious little incentive for corporate giving, so the private sector is only motivated to donate to causes when they can anticipate direct benefit for their business interests.

The problem with philanthropy as an avenue of funding for human rights organizations is multi-faceted, and requires long-term strategies for change by the organizations themselves and by the donors that traditionally support them. There are paths open for income generation and even for corporate and individual giving, but first the organizations must be willing to consider new ways of thinking and new approaches to their work, especially with respect to their connections and communications with the citizens of Serbia.

INTERACTION AMONG COMPONENTS AND IMPLEMENTERS

Evaluation Question 3: How effective was the interaction among different CSF partners (including sub-recipients) and across different mechanisms and how can USAID strengthen that interaction during Phase II?

Findings

The structure of the CSF Project Phase One was complex, and most informants were only vaguely aware that the OCCS, ISC (and its partners), and the three pilot direct grantees were part and parcel of one USAID-funded project. Based on interviews with ISC staff, Core Partners, and HRSI grantees, the evaluation team found that interactions among the primary implementers of the CSF Project across different mechanisms largely took place on an ad hoc and informal basis. Informants including staff of ISC and USAID did not mention any particular strategy or system for linking the implementers. Pre-existing ties between implementers continued, for example between Trag Foundation and OCCS, but there was little evidence of relationships being forged or strengthened in any significant way.

More specifically, the evaluation team found the following:

- **Core Partners** (and in some cases HRSI grantees) encountered each other quite regularly at ISC-convened events, though promoting their interaction and coordination was not often the purpose of the activity (as mentioned above).
- **ISC** forged even stronger bonds with the Core Partners (most of which had been involved in the predecessor CSAI Project), taking much more of a partnership approach and acting as a facilitator of the autonomous development of the Core Partners.
- **Pilot direct grantees** were not convened to share experiences or give feedback to USAID, although there was consultation with them individually. NUNS remained rather disconnected from other CSF actors, though other direct grantees Civic Initiatives and Trag were well connected with the ISC and OCCS components through pre-existing relationships. Few informants understood the purpose of the pilot grants, even among ISC key staff.

- **OCCS** staff were involved in the initial process of selecting Core Partners, but said they had minimal awareness of the other components, including sub-granting by partner CSOs. As well, ISC staff and leaders of CPs indicated minimal awareness of the OCCS component.
- **Sub-granting** was a major component of the Project by any measure, and was being undertaken on a large scale by the experienced Trag Foundation (and to a lesser extent by Zajecar Initiative), as well as by other Core Partners with little or no experience in grant-making. However, ISC and Trag staff could point to no templates or standard practices developed under the Project to act as guidelines for grant-making; rather, sharing of experience appeared to be ad hoc.
- The **philanthropy and fundraising** element led by Trag as ISC's partner did not target the other Core Partners, according to ISC reports and Trag staff, although those organizations have major unmet needs in terms of sustainability planning. Trag was not well linked horizontally with the other Core Partners, perhaps due to its "special status" which implied much larger funding.
- **USAID** interaction with CSF implementers was generally on a bilateral basis as compared to meetings that brought implementers together, and reports from one implementer were not disseminated to others. Design of the APS grants and assessment of applications was conducted by USAID staff only, with no involvement of other stakeholders.
- **Joint initiatives among Core Partners** that can be at least partly attributed to CSF include a new project of the NUNS-led media coalition to monitor the new media law, the PREUGOVOR coalition led by BCSP to monitor Chapters 23 and 24 of EU Accession. Other strengthened connections are described in the section on Linkages and Collaboration.

Conclusions

Overall, only USAID staff were well informed about the different objectives and elements of the CSF Project, including Phase One and Two activities. While the evaluators do not consider that this had a significant effect on the results of CSF, it did limit understanding among key stakeholders and implementers of the scope and overarching strategy of USAID's support at this time of transition. This may have discouraged potential synergies among donors, Core Partners, and others within or outside of the Project. Even among the ISC team in Serbia, who were implementing the core component of Phase One, there were signs of gaps in awareness of other components and of the actions being planned by USAID to move forward with direct grant funding of CSOs. (As will be discussed later, this may have been due to poor internal communications in the ISC Serbia operation.) The evidence suggests that this was a contributing factor to the lack of close interaction between ISC and OCCS.

More regular encounters and exchanges among Project implementers and partners would have been conducive to enhanced connections and synergy among them, and promoted a shared vision. There were no joint initiatives that cut across the CSF components (ISC-OCCS-direct grants), and few new initiatives that involved more than one Core Partner or HRSI grantee, although some prior collaborations were continued. There is evidence of some resistance among prominent CSOs in Serbia to undertaking joint projects and open sharing of information with their peers, though this is by no means universal.

MANAGEMENT OF TRANSITION BY USAID

Evaluation Question 4: What have been the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's management systems for supporting the transition to local CSO partners?

Findings

Strengths: As described in the Project Description, CSF has been structured to include a shift from indirect support to Serbian civil society organizations through an intermediary organization (ISC) to direct support by the USAID mission, primarily using the APS granting mechanism. As well, the Project encompassed the first-ever Democracy and Governance-related funding for a Serbian government entity, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society. To date, USAID/Serbia staff are reporting no serious difficulties with the

management of APS grants and government-to-government support. OCCS staff and APS grantees interviewed by the evaluation team concur with that view, generally being satisfied with the process so far. In particular, the evaluation team found that USAID has been very supportive in their relationship with OCCS, and flexible in accommodating necessary adjustments. Moreover, USAID took a collaborative approach to supporting the OCCS, in recognition of the fact that the European Union (EU) is its primary source of funding, and has maintained a positive relationship with the EU, including acceptance of co-funding arrangements for certain activities.

Three pilot direct grants to CSOs using the Fixed Obligation Grant¹⁷ (FOG) form of agreement did not seem to raise any major issues for either USAID or recipients, and on that basis it was decided to use the same mechanism for funding. However, it appeared to the evaluators that USAID's analysis of these pilot grants was primarily focused on compliance with USAID requirements for financial management and reporting. There were no evaluations carried out and grantees could recall no structured process for obtaining their feedback on the grants experience.

In relation to the APS grants solicited and awarded by USAID/Serbia, there were no major problems reported to the evaluators by APS grantees or by USAID staff, in relation to the solicitation processes in 2014 and 2015, grantee reporting, monitoring, or otherwise. This reflects positively on USAID's handling of these processes, though it should be pointed out that only eight APS grants had been awarded at the time of data collection (six signed in March-April 2015, one in September 2014, and one in January 2015). Therefore, reporting and monitoring processes are at a very early stage. No grantees have yet been selected under the second APS round launched in April 2015.

USAID staff and several grantees explained how USAID had helped them to define achievable milestones with reasonable amounts of funding attached to each one, in order to minimize problems in terms of results and financial management. This was important because only one APS grantee had previously had a direct grant (Trag, one of the three pilot grantees), and training on milestones, which are an integral aspect of FOG-based funding arrangements, had not previously been provided.

USAID staff reported that so far they have had no negative reaction by any potential grantee CSOs to the findings and recommendations of the mandatory pre-award survey administered by USAID. They described a collaborative approach in which USAID and the grantee organization discuss any weaknesses and work out a timeline together for making any necessary changes. All eight selected grantees have "passed" the pre-award survey to date, with no grants being refused on this basis.

Various informants from ISC, USAID, and the grantees themselves noted that the APS grants were empowering to CSOs, notably through direct contact with the donor, more freedom to propose what they want to do, and a reduced reporting burden. Although the level of organizational capacity required to qualify for and implement the APS grants makes access to direct funding difficult for the majority of CSOs in Serbia, USAID has chosen to fund ongoing re-granting activities by more well-established organizations such as Trag Foundation, which most interviewed and surveyed informants viewed as an important mechanism for channeling support to smaller organizations that are doing valuable work at the grassroots level, often in regions far from the capital.

Weaknesses: The main challenge to a smooth transition has been in relation to delays in contracting processes, which were mentioned by USAID, OCCS, and grantee staff. With respect to the OCCS, there

¹⁷ Fixed Obligation Grants are a funding mechanism used by USAID to finance NGOs, especially those with little or no prior experience with managing USAID funding. They are particularly used for short-term projects or initiatives in which the work to be done and related costs can be forecast with relative precision. Note: FOGs were renamed Fixed Amount Awards in December 2014, with some changes in the applicable rules, which will presumably apply to the APS round issued by USAID/Serbia in 2015. Additional information can be found by following this link to ADS 303: <http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303>

were lengthy procedures on both Serbian government and USAID sides before the contract could be signed, followed by difficulties in recruitment of the Project Manager. Informants did not point to any particular ways that these challenges could have been minimized. After a period of intense activity, at present the work of the OCCS is moving slowly due to delayed recruitment of a new director. There were also some delays in awarding the first round of APS grants, announced in April 2014, with six of eight current grants being signed 11 months later (and rejection letters sent out as late as January 2015). According to USAID staff, the main issue was the heavy workload of the Regional Contracts Office in Pristina, which is responsible for four USAID missions.

Various informants (Core Partners, ISC staff, and non-grantee CSOs in particular) commented that the APS grant solicitation and selection process is not sufficiently transparent and understandable to those not intimately acquainted with USAID procedures. Factors included the lack of any external parties on the grant review committee, the long period of the call (open for one year) with unannounced committee dates, and the lack of useful feedback to unsuccessful applicants, who are unsure whether and how to participate when the next round is announced. Sample letters viewed by the evaluators corroborated the viewpoint that the reasons for their application not being selected are not always being explained, which is a requirement under Article 303.3.7.1 of USAID's Automated Directive System (ADS).¹⁸ Although the ADS specify that applicants are entitled to request additional information, at least three unsuccessful applicants interviewed by the evaluation team were unaware of this right, and sample letters dated in January 2015 were worded in an impersonal way, and without offering specific reasons for the decision not to award the grant. That discouraged further enquiries from unsuccessful applicants.¹⁹

Core Partners and non-grantee CSOs, as well as one donor informant, remarked there had been little outreach and communication by USAID with CSOs outside Belgrade about the APS grants. Thus far, only one of eight grants has been awarded to an organization based outside Belgrade, although the majority of those grants included activities in other parts of the country. USAID staff remarked that the quality of applications from such organizations was generally not high. As noted above, for all intents and purposes it is the "biggest and strongest" Serbian organizations that have the best chance to compete and qualify for APS grant funding.

USAID staff, ISC, and other informants recognized capacity building for CSOs as an extremely valuable contribution of Phase One, and also as an ongoing priority. Interviewed USAID staff indicated they were interested in supporting initiatives to meet the priority capacity needs; however, there are constraints on the funding mechanisms that can be used by the mission now. For now, it is open to APS applicants to include certain activities related to their own capacity building in their grant proposals. The APS wording is potentially broad enough to permit a grant specifically aimed at capacity building for the sector or a part thereof, although nothing of that nature has yet been funded. Beyond those options, it is uncertain to what extent USAID will be able to assist in continued capacity building of its grantees or other CSOs.

Based on review of grant-making rules and documents as well as discussions with USAID staff, the evaluation team found that the FOG system is not strong on measuring outcomes of grant-funded activities. Compared to the cost-reimbursement model, the donor has less ability to control the quality of outputs

¹⁸ A letter from the Regional Contracting Office dated January 2015 informed the applicant as follows: "The basis for this decision was the evaluation committee's technical evaluation, which assessed your concept's technical merit, proposed draft budget, and institutional capabilities. In making this decision, I have also considered the principles of value for money, cost effectiveness, and other factors." A letter dated June 2015 was considerably briefer: "After a careful review in accordance with the criteria set forth in the APS, the Technical Evaluation Committee concluded that your concept paper is not among the highest ranked submissions and was not selected..." The evaluation team did not consider that either of these letters offered reasons that would be "useful to the applicant in preparing future applications", which ADS 303.7.2 encourages Agreement Officers and Technical Evaluation Committees to do.

¹⁹ Some letters provided to the evaluators included the following wording: "*My decision as the Agreement Officer is not subject to appeal or review.*"

reported by grantees, and if milestones are purely output-based, there may be minimal opportunity to measure outcomes. Unlike the pilot grants under Phase One, the APS grantees have not been required to develop PMEPs, nor any other type of M&E framework beyond the milestones, though the mission does offer its assistance if a grantee wishes to do so. It is not yet clear how USAID plans to arrange for evaluation of APS grants, for the Serbia mission or otherwise, according to staff in Belgrade and Washington DC.

Conclusions

In general, the USAID/Serbia mission team is coping well with the management of direct funding relationships with the eight APS grantees and the OCCS. The agreement with OCCS was only the second time USAID/Serbia had funded a government body, and although there was a slow start and a learning curve for both sides to meet each other's requirements, overall the collaboration has been positive and productive. USAID has been supportive and flexible in its management of the relationship, including around the co-funding of certain activities with the EU, which is to be commended.

Phase Two direct grants to CSOs using the FOG mechanism appear to be going smoothly for both grantees and USAID, although it is too soon to make any reliable assessment. A new APS round was recently set in motion, which could prove more of a test for the various staff responsible for supporting these processes on technical, financial, monitoring, and contracting levels, as the total number of grants may double in a short period of time, depending on the funds available and decisions of the grant review committee.

The concentration of APS grants in Belgrade will be hard to avoid in the short term, given that the capital is the home to the most well-established CSOs with the most obvious capacity to meet USAID requirements and to absorb the amounts of funding on offer. The limited opportunities for contact between USAID and CSOs beyond the capital has led to a feeling of being "left out" among CSOs outside Belgrade, exacerbated by delayed notifications, difficulties in understanding the schedule for grant decisions and lack of detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

Trag plays an important role as the only grantee from the 2014 APS round whose work is based on a significant element of outreach and pass-through support to organizations at the grassroots level outside of the capital. Those small grants can be an important tool, not only for promoting civic activism and advocacy across the country, but also for improving public perception of CSOs and eventually boosting local philanthropy and volunteering. However, it would be best for the sector's overall development for sub-grant-making to be spread among various organizations that incorporate regular engagement with and support to other CSOs as part of their programming. Perhaps the most important challenge for USAID in its ongoing support to Serbian civil society is finding the best way or ways to extend the benefits of its funding to small and mid-sized organizations, especially outside of Belgrade and other major cities.

As Serbian government entities and corporate donors become more involved (some for the first time) in supporting the work of civil society in various areas of endeavor, it is ever more important for USAID to model best practices in grant-making (including grant monitoring), especially since USAID is funding the OCCS to promote increased transparency in government grant-making processes. As USAID continues to support re-granting activities, these practices can also serve as an excellent example for Serbian CSOs engaged in those activities, and thus contribute to increased local capacity.

GENERAL – PROJECT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

In addition to information related to the specific questions posed for the evaluation, the process of data collection and analysis gave rise to some findings and conclusions that cut across the CSF Project and are relevant to more than one evaluation question. Some emerged from informants, while others are based on review of project documentation by the evaluation team. The most important observations are noted in this section.

Findings

Phase One of CSF was dominated by the component implemented by ISC and its partners, which gave rise to the majority of comments related to design and management of Phase One of the Project. The ET found that the ISC component was very generously funded with nearly \$8 million for two years of implementation, which meant that resources were available to have a substantial ISC staff team supplemented by various consultants and contractors (public relations, proposal development, capacity assessment, etc.). Even after a large sub-agreement with Trag Foundation valued at \$1.5 million, the funds available allowed for substantial grants to the other ten Core Partners for both advocacy work and capacity building. Various informants within ISC and the Core Partners mentioned this represented a huge inflow of cash for Trag and the other Partners, compared to the rate of previous funding under CSAI, and considering the “burn rate” that was required to effectively use those resources over a short period of time.

In this scenario, there was no time to be lost in launching and executing all aspects of the ISC component. USAID’s expectation was that ISC would be able to manage an expedited start-up, but that did not prove to be the case—at least in part because the start-up overlapped heavily with the closing stages of CSAI, implemented by the same team. Another delaying factor was the difficulty in recruiting a Chief of Party (COP) who met the approval of both ISC and USAID, after the originally proposed person became unavailable. Various informants from ISC and the Core Partners commented that the person ultimately selected as COP had inadequate management experience and skills. Although ISC attempted to shore up his leadership with other personnel during the life of Phase One, management continued to be problematic. ISC requested a no-cost extension late in 2013, given that implementation was behind schedule, but that request was not granted by USAID. Unfortunately, the project trajectory was then further hampered by early elections in 2014 and disastrous flooding across much of Serbia in May 2014. From USAID’s side, some ISC staff mentioned that delays were occasioned by the prolonged absence (due to illness) of the Agreement Officer responsible for overseeing CSF, and her eventual replacement.

ISC staff informants and review of project documents indicated that in some respects of the Project, the compressed timeframes resulting from these delays contributed to a “box-checking” approach within ISC and some Core Partners, all of whom were trying very hard to get through a heavy schedule of activities and meet competing expectations of multiple stakeholders. The performance of the ISC team was also hampered by less than optimal internal communications (few staff meetings held, one staff not aware of what another was doing with the same partner); this was the most likely reason that some key ISC staff were not well informed about important steps being taken by USAID to start the process of Phase Two, such as the APS announcement in 2014 and the commencement of pre-award surveys.

Key informants also pointed to disconnects that emerged between the priorities of ISC, focused heavily on capacity building of the Core Partners in order to prepare them for Phase Two, and USAID, which was looking for advocacy results and media coverage on an equal footing with the capacity changes. There were also signs that ISC and the team of its contractor Root Change were not entirely on the same page in terms of the objectives and visions for the tools being introduced, and the time that would be required to properly implement those tools.

A wide variety of informants both within and outside of the Project commented that the selection of Core Partners for the ISC component was not seen as transparent or fully competitive. ISC decided in its design of CSF to conduct a “closed competition”, apparently as a time-saving measure. The Request for Applications (RFA) was issued to only 35 pre-selected organizations (24 based in Belgrade), 33 of which submitted concept papers for review, after which a short list of 10 was interviewed, and final selection was made by ISC and USAID with no external input. The RFA was issued in December 2012, and it took four months until the nine new partners were approved by USAID in mid-April 2013. The reasons for the protracted process were not entirely clear to the evaluators, but one factor was the decision to expand the anticipated number of new Core Partners from seven to nine. That period did not even include development of full proposals by the applicants—that step was subsidized by the Project itself after the Core Partners were selected, by hiring external consultants to work with each organization on design and

drafting of their advocacy-related projects. Therefore, agreements for advocacy grants were only signed in June 2013, seven months into implementation.

Also relevant to the issue of transparency was the perception by various informants (including several Core Partners, ISC staff, and non-beneficiary CSOs) that interaction by USAID staff with civil society stakeholders was often informal and one-on-one, as compared to structured consultations or information sharing through group encounters. For example, several informants described conversations held in a public venue with an undefined agenda, which in retrospect they interpreted to have been a type of consultation or part of a research process by USAID to inform its next steps. Even among primary implementers of Phase One, there was almost no interaction or joint consultation facilitated by USAID, as noted in the Interaction section.

Of the 11 Core Partners, the mission of one (Autonomous Women's Center) was focused on issues related to women and gender, although some other partners touched on these themes in the course of their work. As well, two of the Human Rights Sustainability Initiative partners were working on gender-related issues. ISC reported in its PMEP results that 1.6% of its projects included dedicated activities to prevent and/or respond to gender-based violence (F Indicator 5.1.1-3). Among 152 sub-grantee organizations within the ISC component, nine were clearly focused on the interests of women or organized by women (judging by their names); of those, ISC records indicate that only a few implemented projects specifically focused on gender or women. Of the eight current APS grantees for which the evaluation team received project outlines, one (Balkan Center for Political Excellence) has a clear focus on gender equality.

With respect to project reporting, the evaluation team observed that project reporting by ISC as well as Trag Foundation tended to be highly selective, with a great deal of attention paid to detailed description of successes while initiatives and elements that did not have the expected results were either skimmed over or ignored entirely (especially in final reports). There was minimal attention to lessons learned and challenges, which was also observed in reporting by Core Partners; the format for those reports had no section set aside for challenges, which had apparently been replaced with the rather vague "Risks and Mitigation plan".

The PMEP for the ISC-led component reportedly took about a year to be finalized by USAID and ISC; one factor appeared to be the prolonged absence of the Agreement Officer, although there was broad consensus among interviewed ISC and USAID staff that the PMEP as a tool for monitoring the Project was given low priority on both sides. At least six of the 11 expected results related to the ISC component were not addressed by the PMEP indicators, and most of the 20 indicators were vaguely worded and nowhere clearly defined. Performance Indicator Reference Sheets were prepared, but most simply rephrased the indicators without adding any clarity or detail; proper definitions were missing even for the five "F Indicators", which have predetermined definitions to ensure consistent tracking by all USAID missions. Thus, it is very possible that ISC staff and Core Partners that provided data on PMEP indicators were interpreting them in different ways. ISC staff reported that only the five F Indicators were given serious attention, to meet USAID biannual requirements; however, those global indicators (ex. Number of CSOS receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions) were not geared towards providing useful information for management or evaluation of the Project.

In addition, the baseline for every indicator was pegged at zero (or in two cases, never set). This clearly did not reflect the reality in some cases, where either the predecessor project or supported CSOs or USAID itself had been working and achieving results (ex. Number of domestic NGOS engaged in monitoring or advocacy work on human rights receiving USG support, and Number of Core Partners with linkages to both local and international actors.) Inadequate training of staff at ISC and USAID may have been a factor that contributed to these difficulties.

Conclusions

Phase One of the CSF Project was a logical continuation of previous USAID-funded investments in the civil society sector of Serbia, and was fairly effective as a bridge to the next stage of USAID support with much reduced funding available. In that respect, its design was relevant and appropriate. However, there were a

number of aspects that made the ISC component in particular less effective than it could have been. The duration of active implementation was problematic, and timely execution would have been a huge challenge even if no obstacles had arisen. As it was, an array of unforeseen events emerged to delay the Project. It is difficult to imagine how another contractor, new to the Serbian scene, would have been able to implement the component awarded to ISC within the time frame allowed. There was minimal allowance for contingencies in the timing of Phase One, and the plans for spending and activities developed by ISC in response to USAID's solicitation was overly ambitious on various levels.

One consequence was that a number of Core Partners had a difficult time absorbing the amount of funding bestowed upon them while also keeping pace with demands for organizational change. A related challenge was the number of innovative methods and tools that ISC attempted to introduce, some of which took up valuable time of staff and Core Partners without bearing any fruit. Weak management and communications exacerbated an already difficult situation in which the Project was constantly running behind schedule.

The transition from major funding and technical support managed by an experienced intermediary organization under Phase One to a much lower level of direct funding support to the sector was rather abrupt. Although some direct granting processes were begun during the ISC mandate, the flow of support from ISC was heavy one day, and simply gone the next—at least from the perspective of the CSOs. There was little in the way of handover by ISC of Project-developed information and tools to USAID or another partner, and no ongoing activities to ease the process of adjustment from an extended period in which ISC had been a key reference point for all things related to civil society in Serbia.

With respect to the Core Partner selection process, it is hard for the evaluators to see what benefit flowed from the closed nature of the "competition." Arguably, less staff time and energy was spent on informing the entire CSO sector about the competition and on reviewing a potentially large number of concept papers, but it is doubtful that the process of arriving at a suitable core group would have taken longer than four months. Even once the path of "closed competition" was chosen, the objectives, process, and criteria could have been shared with the wider civil society community. The outcome was a widespread perceived lack of transparency in the process, and a feeling that the "usual suspects" were the only ones with a real chance at this very lucrative partnership with ISC. While it is impossible to say with certainty, the Project may well have missed out on an organization with great potential that was simply not on their radar.

The opportunity to be part of CSF was of crucial importance to many organizations in a context of shrinking funding from other donors that had previously been active in Serbia, and considering that Phase One was essentially a stepping stone to direct funding from USAID in future. Those selected were seen by the CSO community (based on our interviews) to be on the "inside track" for USAID grants, and that perception has largely proven to be true: five of the eight CSOs with current APS grants related to democracy and governance were Core Partners (although several Core Partners have had their applications refused). Thus, it is easy to understand how those not on the inside track may view the APS process as being skewed towards a group of CSOs that were not chosen through an open and transparent process.

Monitoring plans, systems, and tools were consistently given low priority in the ISC component, giving an impression that both USAID and ISC were simply going through the motions in order to comply with essential reporting requirements (such as the "F indicators"). Although concerted attempts were made by ISC to try to measure change in organizational capacity of the Core Partners, ultimately their time-consuming efforts did not generate much useful data, primarily due to flawed methods. The lack of proper baselines may have led to CSF-related results being overstated by the PMEP data, and the weakness of definitions meant that the PMEP was not a useful tool for either monitoring or evaluating the ISC component.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team's ability to make recommendations applicable for Phase Two of CSF is constrained by the fact that the second phase is already well underway, at least in terms of direct financial support by the mission to Serbian CSOs. In reality, only about 16 months are remaining in the original duration of the four-year Project at the time of writing this report.

General Recommendations for the way forward in Serbia

1. Continue with **APS-based granting to CSOs**, with the following provisos:
 - a. Improve the transparency of the grant-making process, including through inclusion of external assessors, an expedited notifications system, and more open communications with CSOs about schedules for committee meetings and reasons for grant decisions (providing specific reasons for rejections, or at least mention that the applicant has the right to request more information).
 - b. Pay careful attention to monitoring and evaluation of results, in addition to the outputs that are the typical focus of FOG milestones.
 - c. Consider two levels of grants as a way of opening up space for younger/less-established organizations to secure smaller amounts of funding (e.g. up to \$50,000) to implement activities in specific geographic or thematic niches.
2. Continue to support **re-granting or sub-granting** with APS funds, ideally spread among several grant-making organizations and consistent with the mission of the grantee organizations. More specifically, continue to support small grants and technical assistance aimed at mobilizing donations and volunteers for modest but visible **community projects**, as an important means of changing attitudes of citizens and small businesses towards CSOs and inculcating a culture of civic participation at the grassroots level. However, it is crucial that standards based on best practice be applied, and USAID should support the development and dissemination of guidelines and templates as a matter of priority, as well as capacity building of inexperienced grant-makers. Rigorous monitoring of sub-grants (regardless of size) is particularly important to promote accountability for both spending and results, as well as to identify lessons learned to inform future grant-making.
3. Prioritize ongoing **capacity building of the civil society sector**, at both the "advanced" and grassroots levels. For APS grantees and other well-established organizations, mentoring by experts and peer exchanges should be used to enhance priority skills including media and public relations, fundraising from alternative sources, strategic planning and constructive engagement with government authorities. (The APS in 2014 and 2015 allow applicants to integrate capacity building in their proposal, and this should be further encouraged by USAID.) In order to strengthen a wider cross-section of civil society, encourage re-granters to include at least basic capacity building support for all sub-grantees, including the fundamentals of project and financial management, as well as the core laws governing CSOs. In addition, USAID should consider awarding a sizeable grant to a capacity building provider (or group of providers) that will cater to the needs of small to mid-sized organizations.
4. Continue support to **institutional strengthening of the OCCS and its core activities**, potentially with increased level of funding based on identified needs and commitments from EU and other donors. This should include clearly defining the role of OCCS and boosting its visibility and credibility with both government and civil society, especially outside Belgrade. Support should take into account the need for the Office to become entrenched and recognized in government circles, including development of its internal management systems and staff capacities.
5. Support improvements to the **enabling environment** for civil society through various complementary and coordinated channels: the OCCS, CSOs, and coalitions with demonstrated skills and good grasp of the key issues (including potential APS grants focused on legal framework analysis and advocacy), and

diplomatic channels. Adoption and timely implementation of the National Strategy for Development of Civil Society is of paramount importance. Secondary priorities include measures to encourage individual and corporate philanthropy, as well as to stimulate social entrepreneurship, including through adoption of laws and regulations that offer more incentives for donations and for income generation activities of CSOs. External expertise should be drawn upon as needed to bolster Serbian knowledge with examples and lessons learned from other countries.

6. USAID, in consultation with other donors and the OCCS, should consider ways of encouraging the establishment of a **sector lead resource organization or network** in Serbia, without however becoming a driving force of such an organization. Such an organization could spearhead and coordinate the sector's efforts to confront shared challenges – the lack of a coherent sector-wide training capacity, persistent enabling environment issues, weak financial sustainability and public perception, and the critical need to engage effectively with the government during the EU accession process.
7. Develop an **exit strategy** well in advance of any anticipated USAID phase-out or further reduction of support to civil society in Serbia, taking into account the National Strategy for Civil Society Development; from this point forward, the long term sustainability and independence of the sector as a whole should be prioritized in all programming.
8. Support development of a comprehensive long-term communications strategy at the national level for enhancement of the **public perception and credibility** of civil society across the board, as a crucial step towards long-term sustainability and relevance of CSOs in Serbia. This should correspond closely to the relevant provisions of the National Strategy for Civil Society Development.

Operational Recommendations (for the remainder of CSF Project)

1. Promote synergies and **sharing of lessons learned** by sharing written highlights of all APS grants and OCCS activities with all CSF recipients on at least a quarterly basis, and facilitating or sponsoring regular meetings of APS grantees and OCCS for sharing of experiences (potentially organized around a specific topic of interest delivered by USAID, a guest speaker or a group member).
2. Strongly encourage USAID grantees (and the sector overall) to devote more efforts towards **transparency** towards their constituencies and the public at large, including regular dissemination of information about their work and their finances, and support technical assistance in this area as needed to guide transparency initiatives. Funds should be included in APS grants, as needed, for production of annual reports and other activities.
3. Take advantage of the **trainers** who acquired advanced skills in STAR assessment and Sustainability Roadmap under CSF (and others trained under CSAI) to support the effective use of these methodologies with various organizations of mid- and higher-level capacity.
4. To achieve a higher level of engagement of grantee **CSOs outside of Belgrade**, consider a special call that requires the majority of activities or some partners of the grantee to be outside major cities, or alternatively, include this as part of the assessment criteria.
5. Prioritize **structured and official interactions** with civil society stakeholders, to minimize the chances for perception by CSOs and others of lack of transparency and favoritism.

Lessons Learned from Phase One (primarily for other USAID missions)

1. Select primary CSO beneficiaries for major support using fully **competitive solicitations** and transparent selection processes, since any perceived shortfalls in these areas can have long-term effects on credibility of programs and relations of USAID with the sector as a whole. This was especially important in the CSF Phase One transitional situation, when it was clear those selected as Core Partners would have some advantage in competing for USAID direct funding thereafter (although the mission has rejected some APS applications from Core Partners, and of eight current grants, three were not Core Partners). Where sufficient funds are available, expand the scope of funding and technical support to include a larger

number of recipients, in order to enhance inclusivity, broaden the pool of high-capacity applicants for direct funding, and reduce strain on the absorptive capacity of CSO partners.

2. Ensure that expectations for a project correspond with the time available and capacities of implementers, allowing for **contingencies in project scheduling** and prioritizing clearly among competing objectives, including regular check-ins with the implementer on how activities are being prioritized as time pressures come into play.
3. **Phase the transition** to direct granting over a longer period of time (at least three years), avoiding if possible an abrupt end of support by the US intermediary organization and an abrupt end of substantial funding for CSO partners.
4. Adopt **effective APS grant practices** used by USAID/Serbia, which were seen to empower the grantee CSOs through regular direct contact with the donor, gave applicant CSOs considerable freedom in choosing program priorities, and had relatively light reporting requirements compared to sub-grants through the implementing partner.
5. **Incorporate capacity building in grants** for CSOs that are implementing projects prior to becoming direct grantees (as was done in Phase One). Ideally, funds should be allocated based on assessment of the organization's priority needs, with access to funding based on a clearly defined plan and system for monitoring progress. Avoid making separate grants for program activities and capacity building, if possible, to reduce management and reporting burdens.
6. **Expedite APS-based grant-making** in order to preserve confidence in the process, ensuring that contracting staff is sufficient to handle the volume of grants, establishing strong systems for tracking applications, etc. It is especially important that the first round of direct grants be handled smoothly and without undue delays.
7. Ensure that capacity building partners in transitional situations have ready access to the **Non-US organization Pre-award Survey** (NUPAS) so that can use it or adapt it as a tool for both coaching CSOs on USAID requirements for direct grantees and for collecting baseline data on the capacities of target groups. Only results of the survey should be kept confidential.
8. Rely more on **proven methods** than untried innovative tools in cases where projects are of short duration, as results can be unpredictable and adjustments can be very time-consuming.
9. Ensure that sufficient time and trained staff are allocated for **effective monitoring of project results**, including design of a manageable, clearly defined and useful set of indicators (with accompanying baseline data and realistic targets) that are agreed upon with the implementer early in the project. To the extent possible, ensure that all components of the project have indicators by which they can be monitored.

ANNEX A: STATEMENT OF WORK

STATEMENT OF WORK FOR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF USAID/SERBIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORWARD (CSF) PROJECT

I. PURPOSE

USAID/Serbia is planning a mid-term performance evaluation to take place at the completion of the first phase of its four-year \$10.25 million Civil Society Forward Project (CSF). CSF was designed to strengthen the civil society sector in Serbia, while serving as a learning laboratory for transitioning to a new development paradigm as envisioned in USAID Forward/Local Solutions.

CSF is a multi-faceted project that was launched in November 2012 with multiple implementing partners and award mechanisms. Phase One included a mix of both traditional methods, using a US implementing partner to strengthen the sector and build capacity of local organizations, direct assistance to local organizations on a pilot basis and direct government to government support targeting the GoS's Office of Civil Society Cooperation. Under Phase Two, USAID intends to continue its direct engagement with local civil society organizations, continue support to the Office of Civil Society Coordination and discontinue the role of the US implementing partner.

The purpose of this evaluation is two-fold. First, it will assess the extent to which the project (including all of its awards) achieved or is on track to achieving its intended development results related to strengthening the civil society sector. While this requires an understanding of the performance of individual implementing mechanisms, the evaluation should put greater emphasis on the higher level results of these activities and how their inter-relationship supported or hindered the achievement of those higher level results.

Second, the evaluation will assess the implementation approach utilized by CSF and how effective it was in facilitating the transition to direct implementation by local partners. In particular, the evaluation will assess the capacity development role of the US implementing partner and the extent to which it contributed to the capability of USAID's local CSO partners.

The results of the evaluation will be used by USAID/Serbia, and its phase two implementing partners (including both government and CSOs), to both inform and make necessary adjustment to CSF phase II implementation. The results will also be of interest to a broader audience of USAID/Washington stakeholders as they continue to roll out reforms and learn from the global experience in implementing Local Solutions.

II. Project Overview

Identifying Information

Project Title: Civil Society Forward

Project Number(s): See below

Project Performance Period: November 2012–October 2016

Project Funding: \$10.25 million

Implementing Organizations: Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), Serbian Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, Trag Foundation, Nezavisno Udruzenje Novinara Srbije (NUNS) and Civic Initiatives.

Agreement Officer's Technical Representative (AOR): Dragana Stevanovic-Kolakovic

Background and Context

Civil Society Forward was developed in the context of both a major re-alignment of civil society in Serbia and a major paradigm shift in how USAID does business, namely the implementation of USAID Forward/Local Solution.

Civil Society Context:

Serbian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have had a major impact in shaping politics and history in Serbia, although according to a November 2010 Assessment' of Civil Society in Serbia, "Civil society in Serbia is in the midst of a re-alignment." Some local experts and activists describe this as an "identity crisis." Others see it as an overdue transition to a more decentralized, diverse, and dynamic third sector. Today, some of the human rights CSOs that have dominated the sector since the 1990s are struggling to find their place in a post conflict, post-Milosevic era as others are expanding their perspectives to address a broader range of issues and interest groups." A re-registration of CSOs under the new Law on Associations that occurred just before CSF was launched, ushered in a significant number of new organizations with varying capacities and interests which bring new energy, innovation, and cadre of leaders to Serbia's civil society sector. At the time CSF was being decent, data indicated there were 16,000 registered CSOs out of which 4,500 had been established since 2000.

Regarded as the agents of change that assisted in paving the way for a democratically-oriented government in 2000, CSOs have since then, lost some of their ability to influence policy- and decision-making. Research shows that a significant percentage of the public still views CSOs negatively. Polling data shows that most people regard the sector as existing largely to benefit itself; sustained, systematic outreach to potential constituencies and the government is not common practice. This lack of engagement creates a sense of divide between CSOs and the broader public on priorities and key issues, which has led to CSOs losing their constituencies -- or not attracting them in the first place. Civil society capacity remains limited. Despite the improvements in both the enabling environment and CSO capacity-building assistance from USAID and other donors over the last decade, the majority of CSOs, particularly in the rural areas, lack the capacity to effectively develop and manage their day-to-day activities, develop their organizations, operate successful advocacy campaigns and engage in meaningful strategic planning processes. As such, CSOs operate on a project by project basis and rely almost entirely on foreign funding.

The 2010 USAID-funded assessment also identifies the following as primary shortcomings: relative absence of clearly defined organizational missions; internal governance, transparency and accountability of CSOs; strategic planning; organizational development /management; financial and human resources management; constituency outreach and representation; communications and media outreach/relations; fundraising; coalition/network building and management. Speaking about communications and outreach there is a critical gap in the relationship between media and civil society. These two sectors are often synergistic; however in Serbia, the linkages between the two remain relatively shallow; and the realization and use of media as a critical instrument for advocacy, constituency-building, awareness-raising, and opinion -shaping has not yet taken firm hold.

USAID Forward/Local Solutions:

Local Solutions, formerly Implementation and Procurement Reform (IPR), represents a major shift in how USAID operates and is aimed at using, strengthening, and partnering with local actors strategically, purposefully, and cost-effectively to achieve sustainable development. Developing country ownership and increasing aid effectiveness entails greater engagement with a range of host country actors in priority setting, implementing, and resourcing investments in a sustainable way. Implicit in this new development paradigm is the need to put greater attention on the strength of local systems – including capacities, relationships, accountability and adaptability and resilience -- that co-produce development outcomes. Civil Society Forward was designed specifically to address this shift in implementation approach in Serbia.

Project Goal and Objectives

Civil Society Forward's goal, which is aligned with the USAID/Serbia mission strategy for 2015, is to support a strong and robust civil society sector that is able to advocate with the government on much needed institutional reforms, engage citizens in policy- and decision-making processes, and continue progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration. A constructive, active civil society is critical to achieving U.S. policy goals for Serbia, and is a key pre-requisite for Serbia's journey back to being a stable and prosperous democratic country at peace with its neighbors.

The CSF project advances USG democratization objectives while also contributing to economic growth and other goals, since civil society organizations play important roles in a variety of sectors. The program represents a "next generation" effort, in all likelihood the Mission's final major multi-year civil society initiative, which embraces the USAID Forward agenda, including implementation and procurement reform objectives expanding direct support to relevant governmental bodies as well as to local non-governmental actors. The program also represents a major contribution to the Mission's legacy of support to the development of Serbia's civil society sector as a whole.

More specifically, the CSF's core objectives include:

1. Continuing to support local civic activism and policy advocacy initiatives enhancing Serbia's EU accession prospects, particularly outside Belgrade and major cities.
2. Improving prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to expand potential sources of support.
3. Strengthening civil society capacity, networks/linkages and innovation to better address community and social challenges through collective action.
4. Engaging and supporting Government of Serbia in its efforts to enhance cooperation with and improve the regulatory and legal environment for civil society.

Phased Implementation Approach

CSF was explicitly designed to be implemented in two phases. Phase One, which is roughly the first two years of the performance period, included a mix of both traditional methods (with a US implementing partner to build capacity of local organizations), direct assistance to local organizations on a pilot basis and direct government to government support targeting the GoS's Office of Civil Society Cooperation. A full listing of CSF Phase One implementing partners and their role is provided in Table One below. Under Phase Two, which will be carried out during the remaining performance period, USAID intends to continue its direct engagement with local civil society organizations, continue support to the Office of Civil Society Coordination and discontinue the role of the US implementing partner.

Expected Results:

The CSF project design identified a number of specific results that would be expected during the life of the project. They include:

- Revitalized civil society engagement in public decision-making;
- Host-country capacity to develop and implement civil society assistance;
- Enhanced CSO management capacity and financial sustainability;
- Stronger, more effective linkages within civil society, and between CSOs and citizens;
- Improved and deepened partnerships with local civil society and governmental actors;
- Enhanced, progressive governmental cooperation, policies and legislation supporting the civil society sector;
- Strengthened advocacy capacity of civil society organizations;
- Expanded range of strategies and tactics involved in advocacy efforts;
- Consolidation of a core group of strengthened coalitions of CSOs, both urban and rural, that are organized around regional or issue-specific hubs, capable of more effectively defining core mandates advocating for common issues with local authorities, donors and constituencies;
- Partnerships developed between CSOs, media and think tanks supportive of advocacy, outreach and analysis of the sector with refined messaging and public outreach skills; and
- Improved public perceptions of CSOs and their coalitions which can be capitalized upon for increased constituencies, successful advocacy campaigns and financial support.

Alignment with Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Serbia

Civil Society Forward supports the above goals via USAID’s Development Objective 1, "Accountability of Key Democratic Institutions Strengthened." It specifically accomplishes this by supporting Intermediate Results throughout the CDCS Result Framework. Finally, program is precisely defined under Sub IR 1.1.3 “Civil Society Influence and Engagement Increased”. It will strengthen the civil society sector writ large, as well as specific CSO-led policy initiatives, in order to consolidate civic society gains and increase prospects for sectoral sustainability when USAID assistance concludes. In addition, the implementer must demonstrate a knowledge of and sensitivity to gender issues and document how they will address gender issues as relevant, in the proposal, work plan and evaluation report.

| Table One: Civil Society Forward – Phase One Implementation Instruments | | | | |
|--|---|--|-------------------|----------------------|
| Prime Implementer | Award Name/ Instrument Type | Role/Objectives | Duration | Funding Level |
| Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) | “Civil Society Forward”, a cooperative agreement with a US organization. | <p>This activity supports the transition from US to local CSO implementing partners through the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist local civic activism and policy advocacy initiatives (particularly outside of Belgrade and other major cities) that advance Serbia’s euro-atlantic integration. • Improve prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to expand potential sources of civil society support. • Strengthen civil society capacity, networks/linkages and innovation <p>ISC worked in partnership with 17 local CSOs (11 core partners and 6 human rights-oriented CSOs) that were both sub-grant recipients and beneficiaries of ISC’s capacity development support.</p> | 11/1/12 – 1/30/15 | \$ 7,750,338.75 |
| Civic Initiatives (pilot initiative #1) | “Empowered Youth for Positive Changes in South Serbia and Sandzak”, Fixed Obligation Grant (FOG) No. AID-169-F-13-00001 to local organization | <p>To improve position and reduce marginalization of young people in South Serbia and Sandzak by building capacities of youth, youth groups and youth-related CSOs to engage in public life, thus contributing to the development of more efficient, open and democratic local communities and wider society.</p> <p>In addition to the development outcomes that result from the program, this activity was intended to provide a learning opportunity for USAID mission management on the management, resource and staffing implications</p> | 6/30/13 – 9/19/14 | \$ 248,800 |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--------------------|--------------|
| | | of direct engagement with local partners. | | |
| Trag Foundation (Pilot# 2) | “The Social Care Reform Initiative”, Fixed Obligation Grant (FOG) No. AID-169-F-13-00002 | <p>The overall goal of the project is to contribute to the adoption of EU standards into Serbia’s social care system through increasing participation of civil society organizations in the reform process. Specific results include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Community based CSOs are equipped with information, knowledge and skills for their participation in social care reforms 5) Community based CSOs have resources to initiate advocacy and watchdog activities towards the implementation of reforms at a local level 6) Models of good practice for social contracting are created in cooperation with local authorities where possible <p>In addition to the development outcomes that result from this activity, it was intended to provide a learning opportunity for USAID mission on the management, resource and staffing implications of direct engagement with local partners.</p> | 7/19/13 - 1/18/15 | \$235,000 |
| Nezavisno Udruzenje Novinera Srbije (NUNS) (Pilot #3) | “Campaign for Media Literacy in Serbia”, Fixed Obligation Grant (FOG) No. AID-169-F-13-00004 | <p>Aim is to build an understanding of the media role in society and to increase citizen demand for quality journalism and information. Short term objective is to implement a multimedia campaign on media literacy and responsible journalism targeting youth, journalist and civic education teachers.</p> <p>In addition to the development outcomes that result from this activity, it was intended to provide a learning opportunity for USAID mission on the management,</p> | 8/20/13 – 11/19/14 | \$248,833.00 |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|-------------------|---------------|
| | | resource and staffing implications of direct engagement with local partners. | | |
| Office of Civil Society Cooperation with Civil Society | “Civil Society Enabling Environment”, Output Based Reimbursement mechanism, #169-PA-2014-001 | Objective is to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society in Serbia and align it with relevant European norms. More specifically, resources will be used to help build core capacities of the office to deliver its mandate to support Serbian civil society. Directly supports dialogue/consultations between the office and civil society. | 2/14/14 – 8/13/15 | \$214, 834.00 |

III. EVALUATION RATIONALE AND STATEMENT OF WORK

Objective

The objective of this performance evaluation is to conduct a full, evidence-based and independent mid-term review at the completion of Phase One of the USAID/Serbia Civil Society Forward project. The primary audience for this evaluation will be USAID/Serbia and its CSF implementing partners. A secondary audience is USAID/Washington, who will use the results of this evaluation to inform its global efforts to identify lessons learned in implementing Local Solutions.

Evaluation Questions

As mentioned previously, the purpose of the evaluation is to assess both the results achieved and the process by which CSF supported USAID's transition to local implementing partners.

Evaluation questions include the following:

1. To what extent has CSF achieved, or is on track to achieving, the expected results identified in the PAD?
2. How effective has CSF been in expanding the prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to support/sustain civil society activity, including for human rights and other politically sensitive groups?
3. How effective was the interaction among different CSF partners (including sub-recipients) and across different mechanisms?
4. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's management systems for supporting the transition to local CSO partners?

In addressing these questions, the evaluation should pay particular attention to activities and results outside of Belgrade and other major cities.

Evaluation Methodology

It is anticipated that a mix of evaluation methodological approaches will be required to meet the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work section above. The evaluation team will first complete a desk study that will be used to establish an understanding of CSF's activities and environment before arrival in Serbia. Suggested data sources include: (a) secondary data/background documents, (b) project plans, outputs, and reports, (c) key informant interviews, (d) focus group discussions and (e) survey(s) of project stakeholders and beneficiaries. Emphasis will be on collection of reliable empirical data and/or objectively verifiable evidence, as opposed to anecdotal evidence. Where surveys or interviews are used, appropriate sampling and questioning techniques will be utilized to ensure representative results; where references are made to data generated by CSF implementers and their partners, it will be complemented by references to independent data sources and any significant data differences must be explained. The evaluation will be conducted in Belgrade, as well as smaller towns and cities throughout Serbia.

The Evaluation Team Leader will provide a list of interview and survey questions to USAID prior to starting interviews. USAID reserves the right to approve /suggest additional questions. The evaluation should be backed up by relevant data and information gathered from meetings with program partners and all the relevant stakeholders. The evaluation team should clearly demonstrate links between the recommendations/conclusions and data available.

Illustrative methodological approaches for each evaluation question and potential limitations are presented in Table Two below. In developing an appropriate methodology, the evaluation contractor should consider these and other potential limitations and incorporate acceptable mitigation measures. In addition to these approaches, the Mission is looking for new, creative suggestions regarding this evaluation, and it is anticipated that the implementer will provide a more detailed explanation of the proposed methodology for carrying out the work.

| Table Two: Overview of Illustrative Evaluation Methods and Limitations | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Evaluation Question | Methods | Data Sources | Limitations |
| To what extent has CSF achieved, or is on track to achieving, the expected results identified in the PAD? | Key informant interviews; document review | Project M&E plans and relevant project reports; | Key informant bias |
| How effective has CSF been in expanding the prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to support/sustain civil society activity, including for human rights and other politically sensitive groups? | Key informant interviews; document review, mini-survey | Relevant Project reports; relevant stakeholders, surveys | Sample may not be representative of the wider group |
| How effective was the interaction among different CSF partners (including sub-recipients) and across different mechanisms and how can USAID strengthen that interaction during phase II? | Key informant interviews; document review | Relevant project reports; relevant stakeholders; | Key informant bias |
| What have been the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's management systems for supporting the transition to local CSO partners? | Key informant interviews | USAID/Serbia staff, CSF direct partners (government and CSOs), USAID APS partners | Key informant bias |
| Drawing on CSF lessons learned, how should USAID best focus or target its limited civil society resources during CSF Phase Two? | Key informant interviews, focus groups | CSF CSO beneficiaries, , USAID/Serbia staff | Key informant bias |

Available Data Sources:

The evaluation contractor will have access to all performance data that has been collected and reported by implementing partners as part their Performance Monitoring and Evaluation plan for Civil Society Forward.

The evaluation team should also review the following documents in preparation for the Civil Society Forward evaluation:

- Relevant portions of each of the grant agreements associated with CSF.
- Relevant project reports, assessments, annual and life of project work plans.
- Annual and quarterly performance reports of CSF partners and sub-partners.
- USAID / Serbia and Montenegro's 2011-2015 Amended Strategy and 2013-2017 CDCS.
- USAID Europe and Eurasia CSO Sustainability Index

In addition, the evaluation team is encouraged to consult with the following key informants and stakeholders:

- Meetings with USAID/Serbia's Mission Director, Democracy and Governance Office Director, program officer, project AOR and Alternate AOR.
- Meetings with current/former CSF implementing partners in Serbia including ISC Belgrade staff and sub-recipients, implementers of pilot grants and Office of Civil Society Cooperation.
- Meeting with appropriate officials of the Government of Serbia Office of Civil Society Coordination and other relevant Government of Serbia officials.
- Meetings with other donors, including the EU Delegation and those donors engaged in civil society development.
- Meetings with Serbian civil society organizations (CSOs) and beneficiaries of the project.

Evaluation Stages:

- 1. Background Review and Familiarization:** Become familiar with CSF's work, which includes reviewing: the Grant Agreements and all Modifications; Implementing partner monthly updates, quarterly and annual reports; Work plans and Performance Monitoring Plans.
- 2. In-Country Research and Evaluation**
- 2. Field Work:** Upon completion of a background review, the evaluation team will commence work in Serbia. The evaluation team will also meet with other donors, implementers and key government partners, as set forth in greater detail in the Tasks listed on page 5. The LOE allows time in Belgrade to write a Draft Report. The evaluation team will provide out-brief to the Mission on key findings. The Draft Report shall be submitted to the CSF AOR and DG Office Director for review.
- 3. Follow-up and Final Report:** The evaluation team will receive comments on the Draft Report from USAID. The team will then incorporate these comments and provide a draft Final Draft

Report. USAID will provide final comments to the Evaluation Team upon which the team will then submit a completed Final Report to USAID. In addition to the final report, the evaluation team should prepare and submit three communication products (success stories, impact blog, etc.) based on evidence that emerged during the evaluation. Up to ____ work days have been allocated for this Final Report writing time period, after returning from Serbia. The Final Report shall be submitted to the CSF AOR and DG Office Director.

The evaluation team is required to submit all records from the evaluation (e.g. focus groups transcripts) and all quantitative data in an organized fashion and fully documented for use by those not familiar with the project or evaluation. The evaluation report and summaries shall be submitted to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) within three months of completion by the team leader at <http://dec.usaid.gov>.

Agency criteria to ensure quality in the evaluation final report are presented in Attachment I. The contractor shall use all of these criteria in the preparation of the final report.

IV. DELIVERABLES OF THE EVALUATION

The following deliverables will be required as a part of the CSF evaluation.

- a. Recommendations: A key deliverable of this evaluation will be recommendations on how USAID/Serbia should best focus or target its limited civil society resources during CSF Phase Two. All such recommendations must be based on and supported by the findings that emerge from the evaluation questions. The evaluation team must make recommendations in this regard, but it may also make recommendations outside of this requirement. Any such recommendation must be supported by the evaluation's findings. Recommendations must be addressed in each of the required reports.
- b. In-brief meeting: The evaluation team will conduct an in-brief meeting to USAID Serbia Mission's Management in order to acquaint it with the work plan details (draft Work plan to be presented at the meeting).
- c. Work plan: a detailed work plan to be submitted before arrival in country to be approved by USAID Serbia in which methodology and activities of the evaluation will be clearly stated. Adjustments to this work plan will be made based upon comments and/or issues by USAID Serbia staff at the in-brief. The work plan shall at least include the following:
 - i. The methodology for carrying out the evaluation;
 - ii. A draft schedule of targeted meetings and list of potential interviewees;
 - iii. Data collection and analysis plan (including interview questions and protocols); and
 - iv. Identification of potential major constraints.
- d. Out-briefing: The team will conduct an out-briefing to USAID covering its findings and recommendations at the conclusion of its field work in Serbia. The out-briefing will include a rough draft of the evaluation report.
- e. Draft Evaluation Report: The evaluation team will deliver a full rough draft report prior to departing Serbia, highlighting the key findings and recommendations.
- f. Draft Final Evaluation Report: The evaluation final report will include an executive summary, introduction, background of the local context and the projects being evaluated, the main evaluation questions, the methodology or methodologies, the limitations to the evaluation, findings, conclusions, and

recommendations and lessons learned. The team will deliver a completed report with including a three-page Executive Summary and Full Report of up to 30 pages.

g. Final Evaluation Report: The evaluation team will incorporate feedback and provide its final report, with page length specifications as noted for Draft Final Evaluation Report.

h. Communication Products: The evaluation team will prepare at least three communication products that is supported by evidence gathered as part of the evaluation. This includes, but is not limited to, success stories and impact blog.

V. LEVEL OF EFFORT AND TIMELINE

USAID has allocated ten weeks for the evaluation team to conduct their work and provide a Final Report. USAID anticipates that this evaluation will require a total of 115 person days. A 6 day work week is authorized while in Serbia. A notional time table is provided below. This timetable is illustrative – the dates may differ and the evaluation team should allocate LOE per task as needed.

| Illustrative Level of Effort: | Approximate Dates: | Action/Deliverable: |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 7 days | January 19 – 30, 2015 | Desk Study and trip preparation |
| 90 Days | Jan 31 – Feb 21, 2015 | In-country meetings and research, Write Draft Report, Out-brief to Mission, Travel to/from Serbia. |
| 8 days | Feb 22 – March 8, 2015 | Receive USAID comments on Draft Report. Incorporate into Final Report and send to USAID Serbia. |
| 5 days | March 9 – 22, 2015 | USAID comment on Final Draft Report Incorporate comments, Deliver Final Report to USAID. |
| 5 days | March 23 – 30, 2015 | Preparation/delivery of communication products |

VI. TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team shall consist of five members: three technical specialists, an interpreter / administrative assistant, and a driver. While it would be especially valuable that the each of the technical specialists have extensive and documented experience in conducting performance evaluations, it is a requirement that at least one specialist/team leader has this experience.

Specific qualifications for each team member include the following:

The Team Leader/ Social Scientist: Should have a post graduate degree in political science or an applicable social sciences field. S/he should have at least 5 years senior level experience evaluating

democracy and governance programs and at least 10 years of experience in the development field. S/he should have extensive experience in developing methodologies and conducting evaluations and assessments and strong familiarity with the civil society sector. Excellent oral and written communication skills are required. The Team Leader should also have experience in leading evaluation teams, conducting surveys and preparing high quality documents and delivering presentations. An international expert with regional experience in the Balkans is preferred.

Social Scientist/Civil Society Expert: Should have a post graduate degree in an applicable social sciences field and at least 10 years of experience working with civil society in Serbia or the Balkans. Must be knowledgeable of a variety of approaches to civil society strengthening including civic advocacy, capacity development and NGO enabling environment. Past experience evaluating civil society programs and excellent oral and written communication skills are also required. A local Serbian expert is preferred.

Social Scientist/Local Philanthropy Expert: Should have a post graduate degree in an applicable social sciences field and at least 10 years of experience working with civil society in Serbia or the Balkans. Must have expertise in various areas related to philanthropy including corporate social responsibility, fundraising, community foundations, private donor engagement, etc. Direct knowledge and experience with civil society financial sustainability strategies in the Balkans is required. This position may be filled by a Serbian or international expert.

Interpreter /Administrative Assistant: Will provide translation support to the team throughout the evaluation, as needed. Must be fluent in both English and Serbian and have a proven track record of providing similar support to evaluation teams.

Driver.

VII. SUPPORT FROM USAID AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

To support the team's initial literature review, USAID/Serbia will provide electronic copies to the contractor of all documents to be reviewed (listed above) one week prior to departure.

USAID/Serbia will facilitate introductions with key informants where necessary and provide a list of recommended key informants and contact information. The evaluation team should not expect logistical support from USAID or its implementing partners.

Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report

- The evaluation report should represent a thoughtful, well-researched and well-organized effort to objectively evaluate what worked in the project, what did not and why.
- Evaluation reports shall address all evaluation questions included in the scope of work.
- The evaluation report should include the scope of work as an annex. All modifications to the scope of work, whether in technical requirements, evaluation questions, evaluation team composition, methodology or timeline need to be agreed upon in writing by the technical officer.
- Evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the evaluation such as questionnaires, checklists and discussion guides will be included in an Annex in the final report.
- Evaluation findings will assess outcomes and impact on males and females.
- Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.).
- Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay or the compilation of people's opinions. Findings should be specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
- Sources of information need to be properly identified and listed in an annex.
- Recommendations need to be supported by a specific set of findings.
- Recommendations should be action-oriented, practical and specific, with defined responsibility for the action.

ATTACHMENT II

SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR AN EVALUATION REPORT

| Element | Approximate Number of Pages | Description and Tips for the Evaluation Team |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Title Page | 1 (but no page number) | Essential. Should include the words “U.S. Agency for International Development” with the acronym “USAID,” the USAID logo, and the project/contract number under which the evaluation was conducted. See USAID Branding and Marking Guidelines (http://www.usaid.gov/branding/) for logo and other specifics. Give the title of the evaluation; the name of the USAID office receiving the evaluation; the name(s), title(s), and organizational affiliation(s) of the author(s); and the date of the report. |
| Contents | As needed, and start with Roman numeral ii. | Essential. Should list all the sections that follow, including Annexes. For multi-page chapters, include chapter headings and first- and second-level headings. List (with page numbers) all figures, tables, boxes, and other titled graphics. |
| Foreword | 1 | Optional. An introductory note written by someone other than the author(s), if needed. For example, it might mention that this evaluation is one in a series of evaluations or special studies being sponsored by USAID. |
| Acknowledgements | 1 | Optional. The authors thank the various people who provided support during the evaluation. |
| Preface | 1 | Optional. Introductory or incidental notes by the authors, but not material essential to understanding the text. Acknowledgements could be included here if desired. |
| Executive Summary | 2-5 | Essential |
| Glossary | 1 | Optional. Is useful if the report uses technical or project-specific terminology that would be unfamiliar to some readers. |
| Acronyms and Abbreviations | 1 | Essential, if they are used in the report. Include only those acronyms that are actually used. |
| I. Introduction | up to 5 pages, starting with Arabic numeral 1. | Optional. The two sections listed under Introduction here could be separate, stand-alone chapters. If so, a separate introduction may not be needed. |
| Description of the Project | 1. | Essential. Describe the context in which the USAID project took place— e.g., relevant history, demography, political situation, etc. Describe the specific development problem that prompted USAID to implement the project, the theory underlying the project, and details of project implementation to date. |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| The Evaluation Purpose and Methodology | | Essential. Describe who commissioned the evaluation, why they commissioned it, what information they want, and how they intend to use the information (and refer to the Annex that includes the Statement of Work). Provide the specific evaluation questions, and briefly describe the evaluation design and the analytical and data collection methods used to answer them. Describe the evaluation team (i.e., names, qualifications, and roles), what the team did (e.g., reviewed relevant documents, analyzed secondary data, interviewed key informants, conducted a survey, conducted site visits), and when and where they did it. Describe the major limitations encountered in data collection and analysis that have implications for reviewing the results of the evaluation. Finally, refer to the Annex that provides a fuller description of all of the above, including a list of documents/data sets reviewed, a list of individuals interviewed, copies of the data collection instruments used, and descriptions of sampling procedures (if any) and data analysis procedures. |
| II. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations | 20 | Essential. |
| Annexes | | |
| Statement of Work | Some are essential and some are optional as noted | Essential. Lets the reader see exactly what USAID initially expected in the evaluation |
| Evaluation Design and Methodology | | Essential. Provides a more complete description of the evaluation questions, design, and methods used. Also includes copies of data collection instruments (e.g., interview guides, survey instruments, etc.) and describes the sampling and analysis procedures that were used. |
| Interviewed List of Persons | | Essential. |
| List of Documents Reviewed | | Essential. Includes written and electronic documents reviewed, background literature, secondary data sources, citations of websites consulted. |
| Dissenting Views Reviewed | | If needed. Include if a team member or a major stakeholder does not agree with one or more findings, conclusions, or recommendations. |

ATTACHMENT III

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluations

Instructions:

Evaluations of USAID projects will be undertaken so that they are not subject to the perception or reality of biased measurement or reporting due to conflict of interest. For external evaluations, all evaluation team members will provide a signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing an existing conflict of interest relative to the project being evaluated.

Evaluators of USAID projects have a responsibility to maintain independence so that opinions, conclusions, judgments, and recommendations will be impartial and will be viewed as impartial by knowledgeable third parties. Evaluators and evaluation team members are to disclose all relevant facts regarding real or potential conflicts of interest that could lead reasonable third parties with knowledge of the relevant facts and circumstances to conclude that the evaluator or evaluation team member is not able to maintain independence and, thus, is not capable of exercising objective and impartial judgment on all issues associated with conducting and reporting the work. Operating Unit leadership, in close consultation with the Contracting Officer, will determine whether the real or potential conflict of interest is one that should disqualify an individual from the evaluation team or require recusal by that individual from evaluating certain aspects of the project(s)

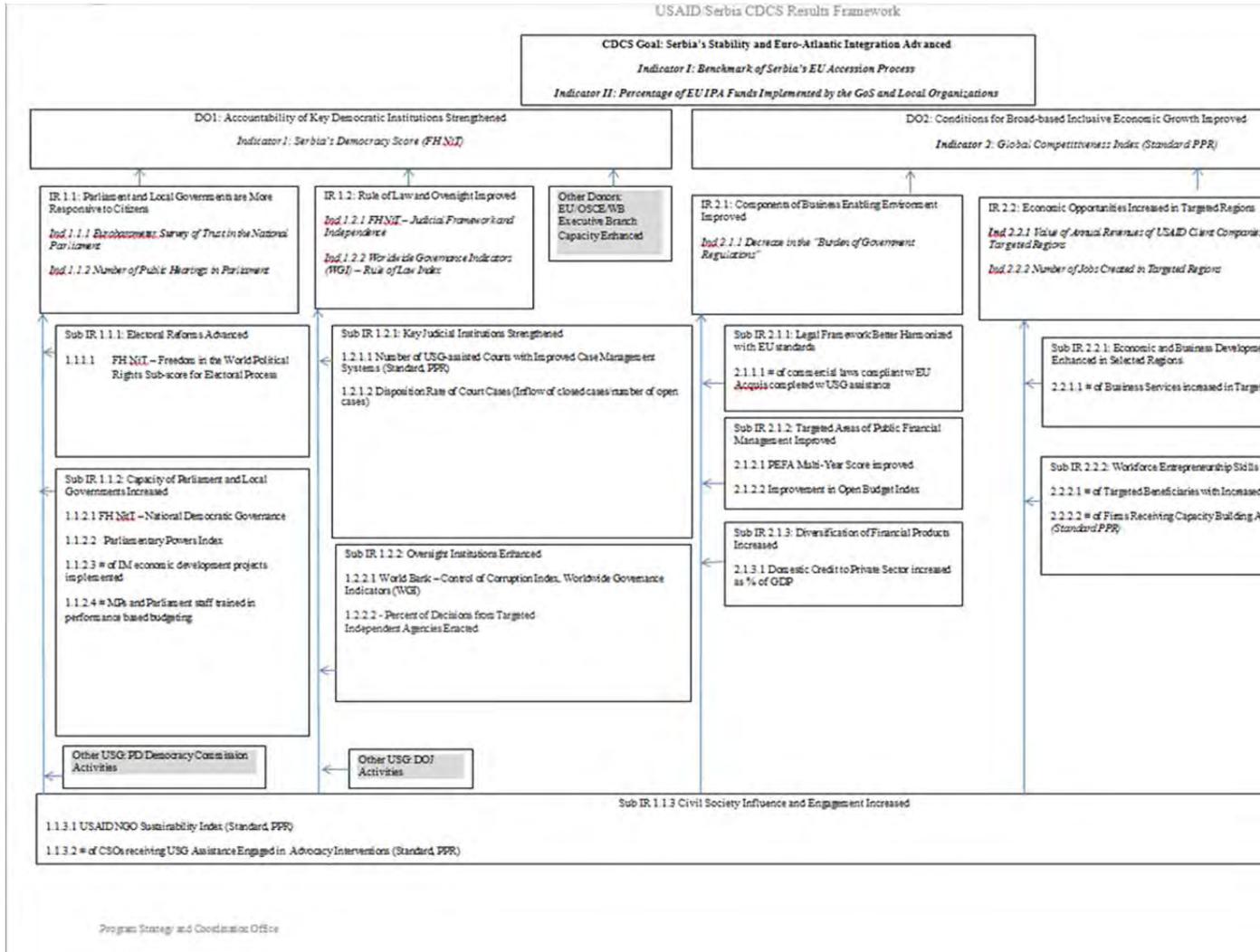
Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

1. Immediate family or close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant/material though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.
3. Current or previous direct or significant/material though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.
4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form

| | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Name | | |
| Title | | |
| Organization | | |
| Evaluation Position? | | Team Leader / Team member |
| Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument, if applicable) | | |
| USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable) | | |
| I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose. | | Yes No |
| <p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. | | |
| <p>I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.</p> | | |
| Signature: | | |
| Date: | | |

ATTACHMENT IV Results Framework AO1 and AO2 2013 – 2017



ANNEX B: EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE AND APPROACH

DI hereby presents its plan for conducting the mid-term performance evaluation of USAID/Serbia's Civil Society Forward (CSF) Project, implemented by one US-based organization (Institute for Sustainable Communities or ISC), several Serbian civil society organizations, and one Serbian government agency. CSF was designed to strengthen the civil society sector in Serbia, while serving as a learning laboratory for transitioning to a new development paradigm as envisioned in USAID Forward/Local Solutions.

The evaluation will provide a detailed examination of the progress towards meeting the four overarching objectives of the Project, as described in the Scope of Work: (1) continuing to support local civic activism and policy advocacy initiatives enhancing Serbia's EU accession prospects, particularly outside Belgrade and major cities; (2) improving prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to expand potential sources of support; (3) strengthening civil society capacity, networks/linkages and innovation to better address community and social challenges through collective action; and (4) engaging and supporting the Government of Serbia in its efforts to enhance cooperation with and improve the regulatory and legal environment for civil society.

The evaluation will also analyze where the project was successful and where it was not, identify the factors that have affected project implementation, and identify challenges to project success. Lastly, the evaluation team ("the Team") will formulate lessons learned for project management and implementation. This involves identifying unanticipated factors that were not envisaged in the original design, and analyzing the project's response to these factors as well as the effect of these factors on the project's goals, activities, and results.

EVALUATION APPROACH

In conducting this evaluation, DI will use an approach it has refined in evaluating many projects in the Balkan region and elsewhere. As outlined in the Statement of Work, this evaluation focuses on determining which project activities have proven most feasible and effective, and how progress made so far can inform future programming. Specifically, the evaluation is designed to (1) assess the extent to which the project (including all of its awards) achieved or is on track to achieving its intended development results related to strengthening the civil society sector, and (2) assess the implementation approach utilized by CSF and how effective it was in facilitating the transition to direct implementation by local partners. In particular, the evaluation will assess the capacity development role of the US implementing partner and the extent to which it contributed to the capability of USAID's local civil society organization (CSO) partners.

DI's proposed evaluation design and approach reflects principles outlined in USAID's 2011 Evaluation Policy. According to that document, "importance and relevance will be achieved by explicitly linking evaluation questions to specific future decisions to be made by USAID leadership, partner governments, and/or other key stakeholders." By measuring project effectiveness and efficiency, DI aims to provide USAID with objective information to enable evidence-based decision-making on future programming, inform strategic planning activities, and more effectively promote U.S. interests in Serbia. DI will also work closely with USAID and other key stakeholders to ensure that the evaluation addresses the most salient questions of project performance.

EVALUATION MATRIX

The approach of DI is to apply specific data sources, methodology, and data analysis to each of the core Evaluation Questions, to ensure a rigorous and streamlined process. The Evaluation Matrix is an effective vehicle for capturing that information in a concise and logical manner, and it will serve as a key guiding document for the evaluation. The Matrix below builds on Table 2 in the Scope of Work for the evaluation, and reflects DI's learning from the document review phase and discussions among the Team on best approaches to the evaluation. Each Evaluation Question posed by USAID has been further elaborated and defined to indicate clearly how each question will be approached by the Team.

| Evaluation Question | Definition of Question | Methods | Data Sources |
|--|--|---|---|
| To what extent has CSF achieved, or is on track to achieving, the expected results identified in the PAD? | | Key informant interviews, group interviews, document review | Project M&E data and reports, reports from implementers and sub-grantees, various categories of informant depending on the result being analyzed |
| How effective has CSF been in expanding the prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to support/sustain civil society activity, including for human rights and other politically sensitive groups? | Effectiveness means the extent to which CSF has had a measurable effect on the ability of civil society to attract resources from Serbian private sources, including consideration of changes in the regulatory environment and general context for philanthropy. | Key informant interviews, group interviews, document review, survey | Project reports, survey data, CSO Sustainability Index, TACSO reports, business owners, various CSOs engaged in project (Core Partners, HRSI and direct grantees, APS partners, sub-grantees), non-grantee CSOs, international community, experts |
| How effective was the interaction among different CSF partners (including sub-recipients) and across different mechanisms and how can USAID strengthen that interaction during phase II? | Focus on strategies and practices for coordination and information sharing among primary implementers of CSF Phase I (including Core Partners), perceived utility of those interactions, and any joint initiatives emerging during or after Phase I. Will research and suggest ways for USAID to support improved interaction. | Key informant interviews, document review, survey | Project reports, all categories of CSO partner and grantee, non-grantee national CSOs and networks, international community, experts |
| What have been the strengths and weaknesses of USAID's management systems for supporting the transition to local CSO partners? | Focus on how USAID has planned and handled the transition to direct support of local implementers of civil society programming in Serbia, including government bodies. | Key informant interviews, document review | USAID Forward documents, ISC analysis of CSF as case study, USAID/Serbia staff, CSF direct partners (ISC, government and CSOs), APS partners, non-grantee national CSOs and networks, international community, experts |

METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

The proposed evaluation will primarily rely on Rapid Appraisal, an approach that utilizes several evaluation methods to collect data quickly yet systematically. In conducting the evaluation, the Team will apply Rapid Appraisal tools such as a document review, key informant interviews, and group interviews. By using multiple evaluation methods and triangulating results (described in more detail below), the Team will strengthen the validity of its findings and answer the evaluation questions as included in the Scope of Work.

To contribute to the collection of honest viewpoints and reliable information, the Team will ensure informants of their anonymity. Although an informant list will be maintained by the Team, interviewees will have the option of having their names omitted from the final list. Selection of informants will be based on suggestions from USAID, participant lists from various project activities, desk research, and recommendations by civil society experts. Although project implementers such as ISC may be asked for suggestions and contact information to facilitate the process of arranging meetings, the final decision on informants will in all cases be made by the DI Team.

The selection will take into account such factors as location, gender, type of support received from the project (training, funding, mentoring, network facilitation, information, etc.), type of organization and affiliation of informant (CSO, government, media, academic, etc.). The Team will aim for a reasonable balance of all those factors among interview informants, to ensure that a wide range of voices are heard and that no relevant group is left out. At present, the Team plans to conduct in-person data collection in Southwest Serbia (including Sandjak), Southeast Serbia (including Zajecar), and Vojvodina, in addition to a substantial number of interviews with key informants headquartered in Belgrade and the Central Region of the country.

PHASE I: PREPARATION AND INITIAL DESK REVIEW

Before arriving in country, the Team Leader and Subject Matter Experts are conducting a comprehensive document review to gather relevant data and gain a preliminary understanding of the project's goals, implementation plans, and M&E efforts. The document review includes the ISC Cooperative Agreement as well as agreements entered into with the three Serbian CSO direct grant recipients and with the Government of Serbia's Office of Cooperation with Civil Society, progress reports and final reports submitted to USAID by all five implementers, Performance Monitoring Plans including indicator data for ISC and CSO grantees, other deliverables produced by the project, USAID/Serbia strategy documents, USAID Forward core documents, and secondary research materials relevant to the project context in Serbia (see Annex D for a full listing).

The information from the document review will enhance the Team's understanding of the Project, including activities carried out thus far, along with the range of programming approaches, opportunities, and constraints in this area. The review will also help the Team to refine its evaluation design and work plan based on a more thorough understanding of the project's activities.

PHASE II: FIELDWORK AND DATA COLLECTION

IN-BRIEF AND CONSULTATIONS WITH THE MISSION

Upon arrival in Belgrade, the Team will participate in an in-brief with the Mission to develop a more nuanced and detailed understanding of USAID's goals for the evaluation as well as to clarify the evaluation approach. During the in-brief, the Team will discuss its proposed evaluation agenda with USAID, including the interviewees who can best provide substantive feedback on the project and represent diverse views, and the regions and sites to be visited by the Team. As a follow-up to this meeting, the Team will revise the work plan and evaluation design. The final version will set forth, in

accord with decisions made at the in-brief, the agreed evaluation activities, list of interviewees, planned deployments, work plan, and interview guides.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The evaluation team will conduct approximately 65 qualitative, in-depth interviews with a wide range of key informants. In consultation with USAID, DI will select interviewees who can provide substantive feedback on the project and its effects and who reflect diverse views. The Team will interview informants with broad knowledge and understanding as well as individuals who have detailed information on a specific topic. DI will focus primarily on interviews with key stakeholders, including: USAID and U.S. Embassy officials; current and former ISC staff; staff of the three CSOs that received pilot direct grants; staff of the Core Partner CSOs including those engaged as part of the Human Rights Sustainability Initiative in Year 2; government officials in the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society; other donor organizations and international institutions; experts in civil society and governance issues in Serbia and the region; representatives of selected recipients of sub-grants; and other project beneficiaries and stakeholders that may be identified as the evaluation moves forward.

In the event that the Team is not able to interview a particular constituency or key actor, it will identify alternate sources as proxies who are able to provide similar information. These interviews will be conducted in person whenever possible, although in a few cases the Team may be limited to telephone or e-mail communications.

SURVEY

The Team will develop a **short survey** (15-20 questions) to be distributed among all CSOs that were beneficiaries of sub-grants or re-granting mechanisms under any component of the CSF Project. We anticipate that the survey will be sent to at least 140 organizations across the country, using email addresses provided by ISC and the pilot direct grantees. The survey will focus on topics that are cross-cutting for all sub-grantees, focusing on key questions that respond to the four core Evaluation Questions defined by USAID. While many questions will be the same for all respondents, the survey may also include specific questions for specific sub-sets of sub-grantees. The survey instruments will first be developed in English for approval by the Mission, before being translated. Survey questions will have closed responses, thus obviating the need for translating them into English, and facilitating its completion by respondents. The English version of the questions will be included alongside the Serbian text, in order to ease the process of analyzing survey data.

The survey will explore how these CSO leaders view the financial support received, how the work of those CSOs has been affected, and how the grants were administered, among other topics. Areas of inquiry will include their perspectives on the usefulness of assistance received through the project, on the prospects for fundraising and philanthropy to sustain their organizations and activities, and on the priorities for future development of civil society in Serbia. The survey will also touch on the question of sub-grantees' interaction with other project components and participants (CSOs and others), and to what extent they have benefited from those interactions, including participation in networks or coalitions.

As internet access is apparently high among CSOs that participated in the project, the survey will be conducted using a web-based tool such as Survey Monkey™, to ensure a confidential, easily accessible, and fast methodology of collecting and analyzing data. That tool will be supplemented by telephone and email follow-ups to boost response rates, which may initially be low. Response rates will also depend greatly on whether contact information available from ISC and other grantors is up to date. Emailing of the questions by the automated online system will be preceded by an emailed introduction to the survey and explanation of its purposes, together with assurances of confidentiality of responses.

GROUP INTERVIEWS

The evaluation team plans to conduct at least five group interviews in three to four different districts of Serbia with leaders or active members of CSOs and informal civic groups that have received sub-grants through the Project, in order to assess their collective experience with the sub-grant projects, their interaction with the granting organizations and other CSOs involved in the Project, their fundraising efforts, and their interactions with other civil society bodies. Depending on the nature of the sub-grantees in each group (category of sub-grant and thematic area of work), interview guides will be adjusted to respond to specific evaluation questions that are of most relevance to that particular group.

These facilitated discussions with 5-8 participants each will allow for exchange and discussion of experiences and viewpoints, and enable the Team to probe for lessons learned and recommendations for future support to civil society at the grassroots level. This information will serve to complement the data collected through the survey from sub-grantee organizations across the country. Final selection of locations for these meetings will be made based on discussions with USAID, ISC, and Core Partners in the early days of field work.

PHASE III: DATA ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

DATA ANALYSIS

The Team will tailor its data management practices to enable reliable verification of results and facilitate future analysis. Sound data governance – including clear data ownership, access control, and backup and archiving processes – will ensure data quality, accuracy, and security. As evaluation team members will be attending some meetings individually, it is essential that the Team meet regularly to digest and analyze data and information gathered during the individual and group interviews, and from the survey. Throughout the in-country period of the evaluation, the Team members will regularly share and compare notes taken during the interviews, identify variations in the information provided to them by different stakeholders, and discuss different expectations and opinions about the project.

Data from survey respondents will be used to confirm and substantiate the findings from document review and interviews, though depending on the response rate, it may also generate new findings. In addition to examining the descriptive information and scale of responses by sub-grantees to different questions, the analysis will check for differences in perceptions by location (Southern Serbia vs. Northern, for example) and by type of grant received (Trag Active Communities grant vs. Timok Active Communities, for example).

The findings from our analysis of the various data sources will be organized and presented in the evaluation report, and provide the basis for our conclusions and recommendations as envisioned in the USAID Evaluation Policy.

LIMITATIONS AND MINIMIZING BIAS

DI is aware that, like all project evaluations, the CSF Project evaluation is subject to several limitations. The evaluation team will take active steps to minimize bias and generate systematic, verifiable, credible information. The Team will use social science-based analysis techniques to identify confounding variables, bolster internal and external validity, and correct for sources of bias. Based on a realistic assessment of the evaluation design limitations, the Team will exercise due caution when drawing conclusions and extrapolating results. The following are some specific limitations anticipated by the Team as this time:

1. Given that Phase I of the Project has ended, ISC no longer has offices or staff in Serbia, nor do they have dedicated staff on this Project in their headquarters. This may pose challenges in terms

of contacting and securing interviews with key Project staff, and perhaps in terms of obtaining timely responses to document requests or other communications.

2. The Project was designed (among other things) to support the transition from civil society programming largely channeled through a US-based implementing organization (in this case, ISC) to a model based on direct funding of Serbian CSOs and other entities by the USAID mission. The evaluation has been tasked with commenting on USAID management systems that are meant to be supporting this ongoing transition process. Since Phase II of the Project has just begun, there will be constraints on the evaluation's ability to make findings on how well the direct funding element is working, after the end of ISC's intervention.
3. As some informants may decline to participate in the evaluation, there is a possibility of *selection* bias, i.e. those respondents who choose to participate might differ from those who do not in terms of their attitudes and perceptions, affiliations with government/non-government structures, and socio-demographic characteristics and experience, among other factors. In mitigation, the Team will ensure that invitations to provide information to the evaluation stress the independence of the process, the purpose of the evaluation, and the confidentiality that will be provided.
4. There is a known tendency among respondents to under-report socially undesirable answers and alter their responses to approximate what they perceive as the social norm (*halo* bias). The extent to which respondents will be prepared to reveal their true opinions may also vary for some questions that call upon the respondents to assess the performance of their colleagues or people on whom they depend for the provision of services. To mitigate this limitation, the Team will: provide the respondents with confidentiality and anonymity guarantees, where possible; conduct the interviews in settings where respondents feel comfortable; and aim to establish rapport between the interviewer and the respondent.
5. Differentiation/separation of results and interventions of the Project and its predecessor, the Civil Society Advocacy Initiative, also implemented by ISC, may be problematic. Informants may confuse them, and beneficiaries of both projects may have difficulties in distinguishing the effects of one project from the other. To address this challenge, the Team will ensure that informants are clearly informed about the name and dates of the project being evaluated, and also review documents related to the predecessor project in order to become familiar with it, which should facilitate identification of cases of "mistaken identity".
6. Because the Project's structure involves several Serbian CSOs and the OCCS taking a prominent role in leading implementation of certain areas of activity, in addition to ISC's direct interventions, it is possible that some sub-grantees and other stakeholders may not be aware of the CSF Project as such, of USAID as its donor, or of ISC's role. Some may have had no direct contact at all with USAID or ISC. This will necessitate extra attention when inviting informants for interviews or to participate in the survey, in relation to how the Project is named or described, in order to ensure that informants understand why they are being contacted and which activities are of relevance to the evaluation.
7. The timeframe of this evaluation requires a narrow, focused approach and precludes more rigorous, quantitative evaluation techniques. As the Rapid Appraisal techniques utilized in this evaluation rely on non-representative samples, the evaluation team will not be able to generalize results across the entire population. Nevertheless, by using a mixed-methods approach, the Team can compare data collected using one method to data collected using other methods. Triangulation reduces bias and strengthens the validity of evaluation findings by acting as a check on the findings from any one method.
8. The evaluation timeline may also make it difficult to conduct follow-up interviews or to explore unintended consequences in detail. The Team will work with USAID to carefully select and cull the interviewee list to include individuals who not only can provide substantive feedback but also

provide us with balanced, unbiased information. DI will endeavor to gather information not only from the senior leadership of organizations but also with lower-level individuals who will be able to provide a different perspective. To the greatest extent possible, DI will ensure that our interview list is representative with regard to organization, region, and gender, among other factors.

DELIVERABLES

As part of the evaluation, DI will provide the following deliverables to USAID:

DI is submitting the present draft work plan in time for the USAID Mission to have working days for review and comment before the Team Leader and experts travel to Serbia. Upon arrival in country, the Team will conduct an in-brief with the Mission to discuss the draft design plan and work plan. DI will submit a revised work plan after the in-brief. Before departing the country after data collection, the Team will conduct an out-brief meeting with the Mission and present a detailed outline of main findings and recommendations. Within three weeks of the Team's departure, DI will submit the draft evaluation report to USAID/Serbia. Within two weeks thereafter, DI will receive feedback from the Mission and revise the report accordingly. DI will submit the final evaluation report within two weeks of receiving comments, along with all relevant evaluation records. The following week, DI will submit the communications products based on the content of the final report.

Tasks and deliverables will be completed according to the implementation plan that can be found in Annex A. This plan appears in chart form in Annex B.

EVALUATION TIMELINE

PREPARATION AND PRELIMINARY DESK REVIEW

- **Week 1-2: May 17-30**
 - Evaluation team conducts document review and conducts preliminary discussions with USAID.
 - Evaluation team prepares methodology and drafts Evaluation Work Plan.
- **Week 2: May 24-30**
 - Logistics Assistant, in consultation with the Team and DI home office, coordinates logistics for work in Serbia, including setting up first interviews, and arranging logistics, such as lodging and transportation.
 - Translator begins translation of data collection tools to Serbian language.
 - Middle of Week 2: DI submits draft Evaluation Work Plan to USAID/Serbia for review.
 - End of Week 2: Team travels to Serbia.

FIELDWORK AND DATA COLLECTION

- **Week 3: May 31-June 6**
 - Evaluation team conducts in-brief with USAID/Serbia. USAID provides comments on evaluation Work Plan.
 - Evaluation team finalizes Work Plan based on USAID comments.
 - Evaluation team conducts data collection in Belgrade (five days).
 - Evaluation team launches survey of sub-grantees.
- **Week 4: June 7-13**
 - Evaluation team travels to districts.
 - Evaluation team conducts data collection in districts (six days).
 - Follow-up of survey, as needed.
 - End of Week 4: Evaluation team returns to Belgrade.
- **Week 5: June 14-20**

- Evaluation team conducts additional data collection in Belgrade and nearby districts (two to three days).
- Evaluation team conducts review and analysis of evaluation findings, drafts detailed outline of main findings and recommendations, and prepares PowerPoint presentation for out-brief meeting.
- Evaluation team conducts oral out-brief with key Mission staff members on preliminary evaluation findings and recommendations.
- End of Week 5: Team departs Serbia.

ANALYSIS AND PREPARATION OF REPORT

- **Week 6 to Week 8: June 21-July 11**
 - Evaluation team completes analysis of data, including final survey data.
 - Evaluation team drafts and edits evaluation report.
 - End of Week 8, **July 12**: DI submits draft evaluation report to USAID/Serbia.
- **Week 9 and Week 10: July 12-25**
 - USAID/Serbia reviews Draft Report
- **Week 11 to Week 12: July 26-August 8**
 - DI receives comments from USAID/Serbia (on or about **July 27**)
 - Evaluation team revises and prepares final evaluation report considering comments from the Mission on the draft report.
 - Evaluation team drafts three communications products.
- **Week 13: August 9-15**
 - **August 11**: DI submits final evaluation report to USAID/Serbia.
 - Evaluation team addresses any additional comments on the report from USAID/Serbia.
 - DI submits final communications products to USAID/Serbia.

WORKPLAN ANNEX B: TIMELINE TABLE

| Month | May | | June | | | | July | | | | August | | |
|--|-----|---|------|---|---|---|------|---|---|----|--------|----|----|
| Week | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| <i>Preparation and Document Review</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Document review, and preliminary discussions with USAID | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Preparation of Evaluation Work Plan | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Coordination of logistics for fieldwork, including setting up first interviews | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Initial translation of data collection tools | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Submission of draft Work Plan to USAID/Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Team travel to Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Data collection</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| In-brief with USAID/Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments by USAID on draft Work Plan | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Finalization of Work Plan based on USAID comments | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data collection in Belgrade | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Launch of survey of sub-grantees | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data collection in districts, follow-up of survey | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Additional data collection in Belgrade and nearby towns | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Review and analysis of evaluation findings, preparation for out-brief meeting | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Out-brief with key Mission staff members | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Departure of team from Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Analysis and Preparation of Report</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Final analysis of data | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Preparation of draft evaluation report | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Submission of draft evaluation report to USAID/Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Review of draft report by USAID/Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Preparation of final evaluation report | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Submission of final evaluation report to USAID/Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Preparation of three communications products | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Response to any additional USAID comments on the report | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Submission of final communications products to USAID/Serbia | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

ANNEX C: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

A. CORE PARTNER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section 1 – Focus on implementation of grant from ISC

- 1) What was your personal role in your organization's work under the CSF grant from ISC? During what period of time?
- 2) What do you see as the key achievements of your grant project?
- 3) What were the main challenges to achieving the objectives of the grant project?
- 4) Did you use any new advocacy methods or strategies in your grant project?
- 5) What is your view of the sub-granting activities implemented under CSF (by your organization or others)?
 - a. Was this an effective mechanism for strengthening civil society at the grassroots level? Why or why not?
 - b. To what extent were sub-grantees able to implement their activities and achieve their objectives? What were main challenges faced?

Section 2 - focus on capacity building support

- 6) How do you view the processes used to identify capacity needs of your organization? (STAR assessment, mock audit, etc.)
- 7) How useful was the capacity building grant provided through the CB grant?
 - a. What specific change has occurred as a result?
 - b. How do you view the quality of the capacity building that you were able to receive?
- 8) Do you have remaining capacity building needs that could not be met by the program?

Section 3 – general about CSF

- 9) How well were you/other Core Partners able to handle the role of grantors to other CSOs? What difficulties arose?
 - a. Was sufficient support and supervision provided by the Program to ensure effective sub-granting processes by all Partners? If not, what should have been done differently?
- 10) What effect (if any) did the program have on civil society linkages, collaboration, and networks?
 - a. If links/collaboration were enhanced, what results have flowed from that change? (Probe for specific examples, esp. in advocacy work.)
- 11) What effect (if any) did the program have on linkages and collaboration between CSOs and other stakeholders – the media, think tanks, and government?
 - a. If links/collaboration were enhanced, what results have flowed from that change?
- 12) Has the public perception of CSOs and coalitions changed since the Program began?
 - a. If so, which CSF components or activities have had an influence?
- 13) What effect (if any) did CSF have on the development of Serbian philanthropy to support CS activity? (mostly led by Trag)
 - a. What evidence of change have you observed, in your own organization and others?

- b. Which activities or mechanisms have had the most (and least) effect on the ability of CSOs to find resources for their work within Serbia?
 - c. (for HRSI partners) Was the program able to have any effect on the domestic fundraising prospects of organizations working on human rights? Why or why not?
- 14) Generally, how do you see the financial sustainability of civil society in Serbia? Has the CSF program (all components) had any impact?
- 15) How would you assess the work of the OCCS over the past two years, and their relations with civil society?
- d. Did USAID support have some effect on their operations and/or effectiveness? Why or why not?
 - e. On the legal and policy environment for CSOs? For example?
 - f. How much did your organization interact or exchange info with the OCCS during Phase I? Was any interaction or discussion facilitated by USAID or ISC?

Section 4 – new APS grants

- 16) Did your organization apply for a grant under the APS issued by USAID in 2014? If not, why not? If so, did you receive a grant? (IF NO, JUMP TO QUESTION 21)
- 17) *What is your view of the process to apply for and receive the new grant from USAID under APS issued in 2014? How was it similar to the grant process with ISC? How was it different?*
- 18) *(for those who have begun implementation) What has been the main difference so far between implementing the ISC grant and the APS grant from USAID? What are the pros and cons of each scenario?*
- 19) *How could USAID improve their handling of direct grants to CSOs in Serbia?*
- 20) *Do you have any interaction with the other APS direct grantees, in relation to those grants? Are you aware of their APS-funded projects? How?*
- 21) (FOR THOSE WHO WERE REFUSED GRANT) What is your view of the process for application and selection of grantees by USAID? How could it be improved?

Section 5 – General

- 22) What effect (if any) has the Program had on Serbian prospects for accession to the EU?
- a. Which activities (esp. advocacy related) may have contributed to that?
- 23) Were the objectives and design of the various components appropriate for the priorities of civil society in Serbia?
- a. To what extent did CSF complement related interventions by other donors and agencies? Was there any overlap/conflict/confusion?
- 24) Did USAID convene or facilitate any monitoring processes or multilateral discussions with you and the other CSO grantees and/or ISC and/or OCCS about Phase 2 of the CSF Program or about how to manage the transition process to direct funding?
- 25) What is your view of how USAID has managed the process of transitioning from civil society funding through ISC to direct funding?
- a. What lessons have been learned so far in this process of transition, that you think should be captured and shared with USAID missions and implementing agencies in other countries?
- 26) What needs to be done now (and over the next two years) to ensure that the essential needs of civil society in Serbia are met by Phase II of the Program (and/or by other actors)?
- a. What should be the priorities for USAID in particular, within Phase II and otherwise?

- 27) What other recommendations do you have for support of Serbian civil society, considering the current situation?

B. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Note 1 – explain that CSF was a program designed to support development of civil society and the cooperation between CSOs and government, funded by USAID since 2013, main implementers were various CSOs (mention one in their area?) and the newly established Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, etc.

Note 2: may need to use NGO or other terminology if CSO does not seem to resonate??

Interaction with CSOs supported by CSF

1. What interaction did you or your (*relevant government entity*) have with (*relevant CSF actor; could be Trag, Zajecar, other core partner, sub-grantees in the area*)?
2. Did you or your (*government entity*) participate in or observe any activities supported by that civil society actor since 2013? (*probe according to interaction mentioned by CSOs, or in reports*) If so, what was your view of those activities? How useful were they?
3. Did your (*government entity*) directly support any activities of CSOs in your area since 2013? In what way? How did that support happen? (*who took initiative, what mechanism, etc.*)
4. (*if there is a specific CSO subgrantee that carried out a project locally*) What is your view of the activities promoted by XXX organization in your area, with the small grant received in 2013-14?
5. Which CSOs that you know received funding or capacity building under the CSF Program (*refer to actors above*)? Do you cooperate or interact regularly with any of them? (which ones?)

(if they are not very familiar with any specific CSOs involved in CSF, then following questions become more general, about overall civil society in Serbia)

CSO Interaction with Citizens and Private Sector

6. Did you notice any change in the interactions of *those CSOs* with citizens/the public in recent years? If so, what kind of change?
7. Has the public image of CSOs changed in the past two or three years?
8. What about civil society interactions with the private sector?
9. Are *those CSOs* using new methods to improve their relations with the public or with the private sector?
10. Are CSOs in this area able to attract donations and volunteers from citizens and from private sector? Has there been a change compared to two years ago? How/in what sense? Why?

CSO Interaction with Authorities

11. Did you notice any change in recent years in how *those CSOs* interact with government? (*including your government entity and others*)
12. What is the main change in *those CSOs'* interaction with your (*government entity*)?
13. Are those CSOs using new methods or strategies to work with local self-government bodies such as yours? If so, what?
14. Are those changes making a difference in how local government officials view the advocacy of CSOs? Why or why not?

Support to OCCS (CSEE Project)

15. Did you or your (*government entity*) interact with the OCCS since 2014? In what way?

16. Did you receive any training, information or other support from OCCS? If so what did you think of that assistance? Was it useful to your (*government entity*)?
17. Did your (*government entity*) make any changes following that trainings/other support? If so, what kind of changes? If not, what are the challenges? (*probe in relation to transparency of funding of CSOs and inclusion of CSOs in decision making processes*)

General/Recommendations

18. What are the main challenges you or your (*government entity*) face in relation to working with civil society?
19. What do you think should be the priorities for future support by donors to development of civil society-government cooperation?
20. Overall, how could civil society be more helpful to the people of Serbia?

C. INTERNATIONAL AGENCY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CSF Program in General

1. What do you know about the CSF Program, which has been USAID's main vehicle for supporting development of civil society in Serbia since late 2012? (may have to explain components of Program, main implementers, etc.)
2. What interaction did you or your agency/embassy have with the CSF Program to date? (may be with ISC, Trag, other core partners, OCCS, etc.)
3. Did you or your agency/embassy participate or collaborate in any CSF-funded activities? If so, what was your view of those activities? How useful were they?
4. Which CSOs that you know received funding or capacity building from CSF? Do you cooperate or interact regularly with any of them? (which ones?)

(Note: *if they are not very familiar with any specific CSOs involved in CSF, then following questions become more general, about overall civil society in Serbia*)

CSO Interaction with Citizens and Private Sector

5. Did you notice any change in the interactions of *those CSOs* with citizens/the public in recent years? If so, what kind of change?
6. Has the public image of CSOs (generally) changed in the past three years?
7. What about interactions with the private sector?
8. Are *those CSOs* using new methods to improve their interaction with the public or with the private sector?
9. How feasible is it for CSOs to attract donations and volunteers from the public and from private sector? Has there been a change compared to two years ago? How/in what sense?
10. What factors have had an effect? Do you think those changes could be related to CSF support?

CSO Interaction with Government Authorities

11. Did you notice any change in recent years in how *those CSOs* interact with government? If so, what is the main change in *those* interactions and relations?
12. Are those CSOs using new methods or strategies in their advocacy? If so, what?
 - a. Are those changes making a difference in how government officials view the advocacy of CSOs? Are their views being taken more seriously? Why or why not?
13. Do you think those changes were in some way related to CSF support?

Support to OCCS

14. Are you aware that USAID has supported the OCCS over the last 18 months? What information do you have about that support? (May need to inform them of scope and purpose of support.)
15. How relevant was USAID support to the needs of OCCS and of the government of Serbia? (Did it complement support from other sources such as EU-IPA?)
16. What have been the achievements of the Office, if any, since early 2014?
 - a. Were any changes due to USAID support (in whole or in part)? (refer to different objectives and expected results, as needed – enabling environment, CS National Strategy, training local government, OCCS capacity, CSO mapping, etc.)
 - b. What are the concrete results of those changes, so far?
17. What were the main challenges to achieving the objectives of the support agreement with USAID?

General/Recommendations

18. In general, do you think that CSF's goals, partners and activities were relevant to the situation in Serbia over the last two years? Why or why not?
 - a. What do you think of the transition to direct funding of CSOs by USAID? Are you aware of the APS grants competitions? What have been the pros and cons?
19. Overall, how could USAID support have been more useful to civil society? To Serbia in general, esp. in relation to EU accession?
20. Did the USAID support have any negative effects?
21. What have been the effects of USAID drawdown of funding to CSOs (already reduced significantly), and how can the negative impact be mitigated?
22. What do you think should be the strategy and priorities for future support by USAID to civil society development?

D. OCCS STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section I – Focus on implementation of grant

1. What was your personal role in OCCS during the partnership agreement for USAID support? During what period of time?
2. What do you see as the key achievements of your grant project?
3. What were the main challenges to achieving the objectives of the grant project?
4. What were the new mechanisms that were put in place thanks to the grant project?
5. How functional are these mechanisms now?
6. What have been the strategic improvements in mechanisms for cooperation with CS thanks to the project (if any)?
7. What effect (if any) did the program have on linkages between OCCS and civil society, collaboration, and networks?
 - b. If links/collaboration were enhanced, what results have flowed from that change? (Probe for specific examples, esp. in advocacy work for new strategies/legislation, etc.)
8. What effect (if any) did the program have on linkages and collaboration between OCCS, CSOs and other stakeholders – the media, think tanks, and government?
 - b. If links/collaboration were enhanced, what results have flowed from that change?
9. Has the public perception of CSOs and coalitions changed since the Program began?
 - b. If so, how much influence was from your project? What is your view of other CSF components' or activities' influence on this?

General CSF questions

10. What effect (if any) did CSF have on the development of Serbian philanthropy to support CS activity?
 - g. What evidence of change have you observed, from the perspective of OCCS/government?
 - h. Which activities or mechanisms have had the most (and least) effect on the ability of CSOs to find resources for their work within Serbia?
 - i. What is your view on the extent to which the CSF was able to have any effect on the domestic fundraising prospects of organizations working on human rights? Why or why not?
11. Generally, how do you see the financial sustainability of civil society in Serbia? Has the CSF program (all components) had any impact?
12. What effect (if any) has the Program had on Serbian prospects for accession to the EU?
 - b. Which activities (esp. advocacy related) may have contributed to that?
13. Were the objectives and design of the various components appropriate for the priorities of civil society in Serbia?
 - b. To what extent did CSF complement related interventions by other donors and agencies? Was there any overlap/conflict/confusion?

Phase II of CSF

14. What is your view of how USAID has managed the process of transitioning from civil society funding through ISC to direct funding?
15. What needs to be done now (and over the next two years) to ensure that the essential needs of civil society in Serbia are met by Phase II of the Program (and/or by other actors)?
 - b. What should be the priorities for USAID in particular, within Phase II and otherwise?
16. What other recommendations do you have for support of Serbian civil society, considering the current situation?

E. GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE AND QUESTIONS (WITH SUB-GRANTEES)

Introduction

- Introduction of the consultant to the group, and of the group members to each other.
- Provision of information on background to the interview:
 - The purpose of the discussion
 - The intended recipients of findings and how they will be used
 - How feedback will be handled (issues of anonymity, confidentiality, data protection, etc).
 - Rules of the focus group: who speaks when and agreement on how to indicate when one wants to speak
 - The amount of time the discussion is anticipated to take
- Answering any questions participants may have.

Discussion Topics

I. Overall context for civil society

- *How is the current operating environment for groups like your CSO?*

- *What have been the main changes in past few years? [Prompt government approach; funding, particularly from local sources]*

2. Effectiveness of the CSF Program grants

- *What was the most important benefit or result of your grant project? (Each to name one.)*
- *What was most difficult problem you faced in carrying out the project? (Were there any difficulties with the grant management process, reporting, etc.?)*
- *What kind of changes have you experienced in your organization after carrying out the grant? [prompt for short term then longer term]*
- *Have you noticed any spillover effect on other CSOs/community groups in your area that happened thanks to your grant project and/or other support from CSF? [if yes, prompt how that happened and what are the effects/changes]*

3. Relationships

- *Did the grant projects or other support from CSF help you to improve relations with other stakeholders? (prompt for government, citizens, beneficiaries, business, etc.)*
- *Did you have a chance to interact with other CSOs involved in CSF program (core partners, coalitions, networks, etc)? What were the results of the interaction? Have some relationships continued? [prompt about examples of any new network, new coalition, joint project]*

4. Fundraising/sustainability

- *What is your experience with raising funds from local sources and/or attracting volunteers?*
- *How effective was CSF support in this area? [prompt also about other donor/funder support they had the opportunity to receive]*

5. Recommendations

- *How do you think your experience of this grant could have been improved?*
- *What are your recommendations for future support to civil society (what are the priorities)?*

Rounding up

- *Is there anything further anyone would like to add about any of the issues we've discussed, that you feel you've not had a chance to say?*
- *Is there anything anyone would like to add about any issue we've not really covered which you feel reflects an important aspect of your experience?*

F. CSO SURVEY QUESTIONS (Serbian and English)

I. Koje su glavne oblasti rada vaše organizacije? Molimo obeležite sve primenjivo.
What are the main areas of work of your organization? Please, mark all that apply.

- Socijalne usluge / Social Services
- Lokalna uprava i građansko učesće / Local governance and civic participation
- Zagovaranje / Advocacy
- Edukacija i diseminacija informacija / Education and information dissemination
- Zaštita ljudskih prava / Protection of human rights
- Ostalo> molimo navedite / Other> please specify

2. Koliko dugo je aktivna vaša organizacija?
How long has your organization been active?

- Manje od godinu dana / Less than one year
- Između jedne i pet godina / One to five years
- Preko pet godina / More than five years

3. Koji je trenutni geografski obuhvat vaše organizacije?
What is the geographical coverage of your organization at present?

- Nacionalni (cela zemlja) / National (whole country)
- Subnacionalni (dva ili više regiona ili okruga zemlje) / Sub-national (two or more regions or districts of the country)
- Okrug (dve ili više lokalnih samouprava u okrugu) / District (two or more municipalities in a district)
- Lokalni (jedna lokalna samouprava) / Local (a single municipality)

4. Koja je vaša trenutna uloga u okviru vaše organizacije?
What is your current role in your organization?

- Direktor/-ka / Director
- Koordinator/-ka projekta/programa / Project/Program Coordinator
- Član/-ica tima / Team member
- Ostalo (navedite) / Other

5. Kog ste pola?
What is your gender?

- Muškog / Male
- Ženskog / Female
- Ostalo / Other

6. Od koje od navedenih organizacija je vaša organizacija dobila grant od januara 2013. godine?
From which of the following organizations did your organization receive a grant since January 2013?

- Trag fondacija / Trag Foundation
- Zaječarska inicijativa / Zajecar Initiative
- Građanske inicijative / Civic Initiatives
- Nacionalna koalicija za decentralizaciju / National Coalition for Decentralization
- Fondacija Centar za demokratiju / Center for Democracy Foundation
- Udruženje umetnika „Atelje Atelier“ / Atelier Association of Artists

(Note to survey designer: The above question is the one that will determine the name of the organization that will be inserted instead of „*that organization*“ in questions 8 to 17.)

7. Ukoliko ste dobili grant od Trag fondacije, koji je to grant bio? (štiklirajte sve primenjivo):
If you received a grant from Trag Foundation, what type of a grant was it? (check all that apply):

Program Aktivne zajednice / Active Communities Program

| |
|--|
| Program Javno zastupanje u lokalnim zajednicama / Community Advocacy Program |
| Uspješni fandrejzing / Successful Fundraising |
| Perspektiva za održivost / Promising Fundraising and Philanthropy Practices |
| Za održive i konkurentne socijalne usluge/ Social Services and Social Entrepreneurship Grants |
| Sektorske organizacije civilnog društva / Sectoral organizations of civil society (SECO) |
| Inicijativa za reformu socijalne zaštite / Social Care Reform Initiative |
| Ostalo / Other |

8. Koliko ste grantova dobili od te organizacije od 2013. godine?
How many grants have you received from **that organization** since 2013?
- Jedan / One
 - Dva / Two
 - Tri / Three
9. Kolika je bila okvirna vrednost granta (ili zbirno svih grantova) koje ste dobili od te organizacije od 2013. godine? What was the approximate value of the grant (or total of all grants) you received from **that organization** since 2013?
- Manje od 2000 evra / Less than 2000 euro
 - 2001-5000 evra / 2001-5000 euro
 - 5001-10.000 evra / 5001-10,000 euro
 - 10.001-20.000 evra / 10,001-20,000 euro
 - Preko 20.000 evra / More than 20,000 euro
10. Koju ste drugu vrstu pomoći dobili od te organizacije? Molimo obeležite sve primenjivo.
What other types of assistance did you receive from **that organization** since 2013? Please, mark all that apply.
- Obuka / Training
 - Mentoring
 - Informisanje / Information
 - Ostalo (navedite) / Other (specify)
11. Koliko ste dugo saradivali sa tom organizacijom organizacije?
How long did you cooperate with **that organization** since 2013?
- Manje od 6 meseci / Less than 6 months
 - Od 6 meseci do godinu dana / 6 months to 1 year
 - Od 1 do 3 godine / 1 year to 6 years

Instruction to Respondent:

Ukoliko ste dobili više od jednog granta od te organizacije od 2013. godine, molimo odgovorite na sledeća pitanja imajući u vidu isključivo najveći grant koji ste dobili. /

*If you received more than one grant from **that organization** since 2013, please respond to the following questions with reference to only the largest grant received.*

12. Uopšteno govoreći, kakvo je vaše iskustvo sa procesom podnošenja predloga projekata i upravljanjem procesom dodele granta? Molimo obeležite sve primenjivo:
(SKALA: Veoma pozitivno; pozitivno; osrednje; negativno, veoma negativno)

Generally speaking, how was your experience of the grant application and grant management process? please mark all that apply: (SCALE: very positive; positive; average; negative; very negative).

- objava poziva za podnošenje predloga projekata u okviru grant šeme / announcement of grant scheme
- tehnička pomoć tokom pripreme projekta / technical assistance during project preparation
- proces selekcije / selection process
- potpisivanje ugovora o grantu / signing grant agreement
- obuka ili druga vrsta smernica novim korisnicima grantova / training or other guidance for new grantees
- tehnička pomoć tokom implementacije projekta / technical assistance during project implementation
- izveštavanje o grantu (narativni i finansijski izveštaji) / reporting on the grant (narrative and financial)
- praćenje (monitoring) projekta / monitoring of the project

13. U kojoj meri je grant bio koristan vašoj organizaciji?

(SKALA: Veoma koristan; koristan; osrednje; ne toliko koristan; nekoristan)

How useful was the grant to your organization?

(SCALE: very useful; useful; average; not that useful; not useful at all)

14. U kojoj meri je grant bio koristan vašoj zajednici ili korisnicima?

SKALA: Veoma koristan; koristan; osrednje; ne toliko koristan; nekoristan)

How useful was the grant to your community or beneficiaries?

(SCALE: very useful; useful; average; not that useful; not useful at all)

15. Generalno gledano, koliko ste zadovoljni

(SKALA: veoma zadovoljan; zadovoljan; osrednje; nezadovoljan; veoma nezadovoljan)

In general, how satisfied are you with:

(SCALE: very satisfied; satisfied; average; dissatisfied; very dissatisfied)

- finansijskom podrškom koja vam je pružila ta organizacija od 2013. godine? / the financial support provided to you by **that organization** since 2013?
- tehničkom pomoći i izgradnjom kapaciteta koje vam je obezbedila ta organizacija od 2013? / the technical assistance and capacity building provided to you by **that organization**?
- odnosom između vaše organizacije i te organizacije od 2013? / the relationship of your organization with **that organization**?

16. Molimo procenite bilo kakve promene do kojih je došlo u vašoj organizaciji u odnosu na period kada ste prvi put dobili podršku od te organizacije.

Please assess any changes that occurred in your organization since the time when you first received support from **that organization**.

| Pitanje / Question | Da, definitivno / Yes, definitely | Da, malo / Yes, a little | Nema promena / No change | Ne, gore je / No, it is worse |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| U većoj meri smo fokusirani na ono što želimo da postignemo / We are more | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| focused on what we want to achieve | | | | |
| Imamo jasniju strategiju / We have a clearer strategy | | | | |
| Manje smo zavisni od donatorskih sredstava / We are less dependent on donor funding | | | | |
| Imamo više korisnika ili članica / We have more beneficiaries or members | | | | |
| Imamo više izvora finansiranja različitih vrsta / We have more funding sources of different types | | | | |
| Imamo više kontakata sa zajednicom u kojoj radimo/ našim korisnicima / We have more contact with the community where we work/our beneficiaries | | | | |
| Imamo bolji odnos sa državnim organima / We have a better relationship with government authorities | | | | |
| Dobijamo više sredstava od organa vlasti / We receive more funding from authorities | | | | |
| Poznatiji smo i poštovaniji u društvu / We are more well known and respected in society | | | | |
| Unapredili smo svoje kapacitete u pogledu izveštavanja (narativnog i finansijskog) / We have improved our reporting (narrative and financial) capacity | | | | |
| Bolji smo u zastupanju pred donosiocima odluka / We are better at advocating to decision makers | | | | |
| Imamo čvršće veze sa drugim OCD / We have stronger connections with other CSOs | | | | |
| Članovi smo mreža ili koalicija koje su nam od koristi / We are involved in networks or coalitions that are useful to us | | | | |
| Imamo redovne kontakte sa drugim OCD koje smo sreli u okviru CSF Programa / We have regular contacts with other CSOs that we met through | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| the CSF Program | | | | |
| Dobijamo više sredstava od poslovne zajednice / We receive more funding from businesses | | | | |
| Dobijamo više sredstava od individualnih građana / We receive more funding from individual citizens | | | | |

17. Kada govorimo o bilo kojoj od pozitivnih promena koje ste naveli iznad, u kojoj meri je podrška koju ste dobili od te organizacije doprinela tim promenama?

SKALA: veliki doprinos; dovoljan doprinos; osrednje; nije puno doprineo; nije uopšte doprineo)

With respect to any positive changes noted above, to what extent did the support you received from **that organization** contribute to those changes?

(SCALE: it contributed a lot; it contributed sufficiently; average; not contributed much; not contributed at all)

18. Koliko je verovatno da će realizovane promene biti održive i pomoći vašoj organizaciji na duži rok? (SKALA: _____)

How likely is it that the positive changes will be sustained and help your organization in the long term?

(SCALE: very likely; somewhat likely; average; not very likely; not likely at all)

19. Da li vaša organizacija trenutno sprovodi aktivnosti koje su slične aktivnostima u okviru projekta podržanog grantom?

Is your organization presently carrying out activities similar to the activities of the grant project?

Da / Yes

Donekle / To some extent

Ne/ No

Ne znam / I don't know

20. Koliko je verovatno da će bilo kakve koristi za vašu zajednicu ili ciljnu grupu a koje su proistekle iz projekat podržanog grantom nastaviti da imaju određeni efekat za tri godine?

How likely is it that any benefits for your community or constituency (target group) resulting from your grant project will continue to have some effect three years from now?

(SCALE: very likely; somewhat likely; average; not very likely; not likely at all)

21. Koje su trenutno najznačajnije potrebe organizacija civilnog društva u Srbiji? Molimo budite konkretni u svojim odgovorima. (Navedite najviše dve vrste).

What are the most significant needs of Serbian civil society organizations at this time? Please be specific in your response. (Mention up to two types.)

22. Koje biste druge komentare naveli u vezi sa situacijom u kojoj se nalazi civilno društvo u Srbiji danas?

What other comments would you like to make about the situation of civil society in Serbia today?

ANNEX D: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

| Informant Type | Organization | Informant Name and Position | Location |
|--------------------|---|--|----------|
| Core Partner | Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation | Aleksandra Kecojevic (Program Manger) and Zeljko Mitovski (Web and Organizational Coordinator) | Belgrade |
| | Autonomous Women Centre | Bobana Macanovic (Director), Danijela Besic (Project Coordinator) | Belgrade |
| | Belgrade Centre for Security Policy | Predrag Petrovic (Research Coordinator) | Belgrade |
| | National Coalition for Decentralization | Milena Velojic (Director), and Slobodan Dimitrijevic | Nis |
| | Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability | Rasa Nedeljkov (Programme Manager) | Belgrade |
| | Trag Foundation | Mia Vukojevic (Previous Director) | Ukraine |
| | | Blijana Dakic Djordjevic (Executive Director) and Ivana Markovic (Grant Program Manager) | Belgrade |
| | | Marija Mitrovic (Philanthropy Program Manager) | Belgrade |
| | Share Foundation | Vladan Joler (Director) | Novi Sad |
| | Smart Kolektiv | Neven Marinovic (Director) | Belgrade |
| Zajecar Initiative | Danko Nikolic (Executive Director), and Dragana Gogev | Zajecar | |
| Donors | Embassy of Norway | Ivan Kuzminovic (Program Officer) | Belgrade |
| | Open Society Foundation Serbia | Radmila Maslovaric (Program Coordinator) | Belgrade |
| | TACSO | Zorica Raskovic (Resident Advisor) | Belgrade |
| Experts | Know How Center/ Civil Society Expert | Ivana Koprivica (Independent CSO Consultant) | Novi Sad |
| | Kontakt Agency | Susana Milicic | Belgrade |
| ISC | Former staff of ISC in | Bogdan Gavinski (COP) | Belgrade |

| Informant Type | Organization | Informant Name and Position | Location |
|---------------------|---|--|------------|
| | Serbia | Dragan Sreckovic (Program Sustainability and Evaluation Director) | Belgrade |
| | | Aleksandra Galonja (Human Rights Program Manager) | Belgrade |
| | | Nina Topic (Deputy COP) | Belgrade |
| | | Aleksandra Vesic (Capacity Building Director) | Belgrade |
| | | Jelena Leskovac (Partner Manager) | Belgrade |
| | ISC headquarters | Stephanie Rust (VP for Organizational Learning and Development) | Washington |
| | | Gretchen Elias (Senior Program Officer) | Vermont |
| Local Government | City of Niš | Milan Pešić (Member of City Council) | Niš |
| | City of Novi Pazar | Mirsad Jusufovic (Member of City Council) | Novi Pazar |
| | Provincial Secretariat of Vojvodina | Branislav Bugarski (Provincial Secretary for Inter-regional Cooperation and Local Self-Government) | Novi Sad |
| | Youth Office Prijepolje | Admir Veljovic (Youth Office Manager) | Prijepolje |
| National Government | Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU) | Ivan Sekulovic (Coordinator of EU Financial and Technical Assistance) | Belgrade |
| Non-assisted CSOs | Center for Regionalism | Aleksandar Popov (Director) | Novi Sad |
| | Dokukino Foundation for New Communications | Darko Sokolovic (President) | Belgrade |
| | Green Network Vojvodina | Olivera Radovanovic (Director) | Novi Sad |
| | Upright Living Center | Mima Ruzicic-Novkovic (Director) | Novi Sad |
| OCCS | OCCS | Ivana Cirkovic (Former Director) | Belgrade |
| | OCCS | Jovana Timotijevic (Project Manager) | Belgrade |

| Informant Type | Organization | Informant Name and Position | Location |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
| Other Partners and Grantees | Association of Local Independent Media "Local Press" | Snezana Milosevic | Skype |
| | Atelje Atelier Association of Artists | Dzenana Hajrovic (President) | Novi Pazar |
| | Education Center | Ivan Grujic (Project Manager) | Leskovac |
| | Independent Journalists Association of Vojvodina | Nedim Sejdinovic (President of Board) | Novi Sad |
| | Labris – Lesbian Human Rights Organization (HRSI grantee) | Aleksandra Gavrilovic (Program Coordinator for Education), Jelena Vasiljevic (Program Coordinator for Information Center) | Belgrade |
| | Media & Reform Center Niš | Mladen Velojic (Director) | Niš |
| | Urban In (HRSI grantee) | Sead Biberovic (Executive Director) | Novi Pazar |
| | YUCOM (HRSI grantee) | Milan Antonijevic (Director, Project Coordinator) | Belgrade |
| Pilot Grantees | Civic Initiatives | Maja Stojanovic (Executive Director) | Belgrade |
| | Civic Initiatives Office in Novi Pazar | Dzevid Sadovic (Coordinator), Admir Smajovic (Coordinator) | Novi Pazar |
| | Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) | Maja Vasic-Nikolic (Project Team Coordinator) | Belgrade |
| Private Sector | Philip Morris International | Jelena Preradovic Stevanovic (Manager, Community Relations) | Nis (Skype) |
| | Responsible Business Forum | Milica Miskovic (Coordinator, employed by Smart Kolectiv) | Belgrade |
| | National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED) | Jelena Bojovic (Policy Director) | Belgrade |
| Sub-grant recipients | Mladi na delu protiv nasilja (non-formal group) | Anel Grbovic (activist) | Novi Pazar |
| | Various formal and informal groups | 36 leaders and members | Niš, Zaječar, Novi Pazar, Prijepolje, Novi Sad |

| Informant Type | Organization | Informant Name and Position | Location |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|
| USAID | Democracy and Governance Office, USAID/Serbia | Peter Wiebler (DG Officer) | Belgrade |
| | | Jelena Avramovic (Project Management Specialist) | Belgrade |
| | | Dragana Stevanovic Kolakovic (former Agreement Officer) | Belgrade |
| | Finance and Administration Office, USAID/Serbia | Neda Banjanin (Acting Director) | Belgrade |
| | USAID/Serbia | Miodrag Bogdanovic (Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist) | Belgrade |
| | USAID/Serbia | Branislav Bulatovic (Acquisitions and Assistance Specialist) | Belgrade |
| | Bureau for Europe and Eurasia/Office of Democracy, Governance and Social Transition | Faye Haselkorn (Senior Civil Society Advisor) | Washington DC (skype) |
| DCHA/DRG Cross-Sectoral Programs Team | David Jacobstein (Democracy Specialist) | Washington DC (skype) | |

ANNEX E: DESK REVIEW DOCUMENTS

CSF Project (general)

- Project Appraisal Document
- Project Log Frame
- Annual Program Statements 2014 and 2015
- Summary of APS grants awarded and pending
- Samples of letters sent to APS applicants
- Sample of Fixed Obligation Grant agreement

USAID reports and information

- USAID/Serbia Country Strategic Plan 2011-2015 (Summary)
- USAID/Serbia Abbreviated Country Development Cooperation Strategy FY 2013-2017
- Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development, 2014
- USAID Forward Strategic Overview (slide show)
- USAID Europe and Eurasia CSO Sustainability Index 2013
- Final Performance Evaluation of Civil Society Advocacy Initiative (CSAI) in Serbia
- Automated Directives System Chapters 303 and 591 (selected articles)
- Non-US Organization Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS) Guidelines and Support 2012 (Additional Help for ADS 303)
- Fixed Amount Awards to Non-government Organizations 2014 (Additional Help for ADS 303)

ISC-led component

- Cooperative Agreement between USAID and ISC, and modification to add HRSI
- ISC Final Report
- Request for Proposals by USAID
- ISC proposal for CSF Project
- ISC Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Performance Indicator Reference Sheets
- ISC Quarterly Reports, Year 1 and Year 2 Annual Reports
- ISC Work Plans for Year 1 and 2
- Grant Agreements with Trag Foundation and Zajecar Initiative
- CSF Grants Statistics
- Detailed list of sub-grants under ISC component
- RFA for Core Partners
- Final reports by each of the Core Partners and HRSI grantees
- Summary of Core Partners Capacity Building Activities and Achievements
- List of all Capacity Building Support provided to Core Partners
- STAR User's Handbook
- STARNET report by Root Change
- Samples of biweekly reports submitted by ISC and Core Partners

- Reports by various capacity building consultants engaged by ISC
- Qualitative Study - Evaluation Of CSF Core Partners' Communication Materials, 2014
- Civil Society Organizations in the Promotion of Gender Equality Values (English Summary)

OCCS component

- Semi Annual Report No.1 (Feb-Aug 2014) and No 2. (Sept -March 2015) - Office for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Government of Serbia
- Work plan: USAID support project to the Office for Cooperation with the Civil Society of the Government of Serbia
- National Strategy for Development of Civil Society

Civic Initiatives - Pilot Grant project

- Project Description “Empowered Youth for Positive Changes in South Serbia and Sandzak”
- Work Plan
- Quarterly Reports
- Performance Monitoring Plan

Trag Foundation – Pilot Grant Project

- Project Description and Fixed Obligation Grant agreement
- Final Narrative Report
- Work Plan
- Quarterly Reports
- Performance Monitoring Plan and Indicator Reference Sheets

NUNS (Independent Journalists Association of Serbia) – Pilot Grant Project

- Fixed Obligation Grant award
- Final report of media coalition led by NUNS
- Media literacy in Serbia - significant findings
- Performance Monitoring Plan
- Final Research Report on Media Literacy – BIRODI

Other documents and reports

- Mock pre-award survey tool and scores for Core Partners
- Monitoring Matrix On Enabling Environment For Civil Society Development: Country report Serbia 2014, Civic Initiatives
- Individual and Corporate Philanthropy in Serbia, 2012 Report
- Public Perception and Attitudes Towards NGO Sector in Serbia, 2014 Report
- Civil Society Organizations in Serbia, 2014 TACSO report
- TACSO Needs Assessment Report 2013
- TACSO Needs Assessment Report 2011
- Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries 2014-2020
- Civicus State of Civil Society Report, 2013
- Final Evaluation of USAID Project for Support to Croatia’s Non-governmental Organizations (CroNGO), 2007
- Summary of USAID Has Increased Funding to Partner-Country Organizations but Could Better Track Progress, Government Accountability Office, GAO-14-355: Apr 16, 2014

- Local Civil Society and US-Sponsored Development, Policy Report by 3P Human Security, 2011
- Royal Norwegian Embassy Call for Proposals 2015

Additional websites viewed

- CSF Project site hosted by ISC
- Sites of selected Core Partner organizations
- USAID/Serbia
- USAID Forward Data Tables
- Office for Cooperation with Civil Society
- TACSO
- Open Society Serbia

ANNEX F: ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SURVEY DATA

This survey was conducted as a part of the mid-term evaluation of the USAID CSF Project. The invitation to take part in the survey was sent to 164 CSOs, all grantees of different sub-grant schemes within the project. Out of that, 112 CSO representatives responded to the survey, for a response rate of 68 percent.²⁰ In 92 percent of cases, the survey was completed by the director or a program manager of the organization, and 60.7 percent of respondents were female. This document presents the analysis of data generated by survey responses. *When interpreting the survey results, both here and in the body of the evaluation report, it is important to consider that halo bias was probably a factor in the very positive views expressed by almost all respondents in relation to many questions. It is possible that those surveyed perceived that positive responses about their experience, results and grant-maker would be more likely to result in future funding and other support for their organization or their type of organization, from USAID or other sources.*

General Information

Respondents' organizations work in the fields of social services (52.8%); education and information (54.7%); advocacy (50.9%), protection of human rights (39.6%) and 35.8 percent of organizations deal with civic participation and local governance. The majority (67%) has been active for more than five years, followed by 31.3 percent active for one to five years, and only two organizations were active less than one year. With regards to geographical coverage, organizations (43.8%) are active in a single municipality, 25.9 percent active at the district level and 9.8 percent on subnational level (several districts). Finally, 20.5 percent of organizations are active at national level.

The vast majority of respondent organizations (80.4%) received grants from Trag Foundation; Zajecar Initiative was a distant second at 8 percent, Civic Initiatives funded 4.5 percent, Centre for Democracy Foundation 3.6 percent and National Coalition for Decentralization and Atelje Association of Artists each funded 1.8 percent. Grant recipients have cooperated with the grant making organizations between six months to a year (44.1%), while the same number cooperated with the grant-maker for one to six years. Finally, 11.7 percent cooperated less than six months.

Looking closer at organizations that received Trag funding, primarily three types of grants were received: Active Communities Program (38.9%), Community Advocacy Program (27.8%) and Successful Fundraising (28.9%). Other types were Social Care Reform initiatives (10%), Promising Fundraising and Philanthropy Practices (7.8%); funds for Sustainable and Competitive Social Services (4.4%), Sectoral Organizations of Civil Society or SECO (2.2%) and 1.1 percent for Social Services and Social Entrepreneurship grants.

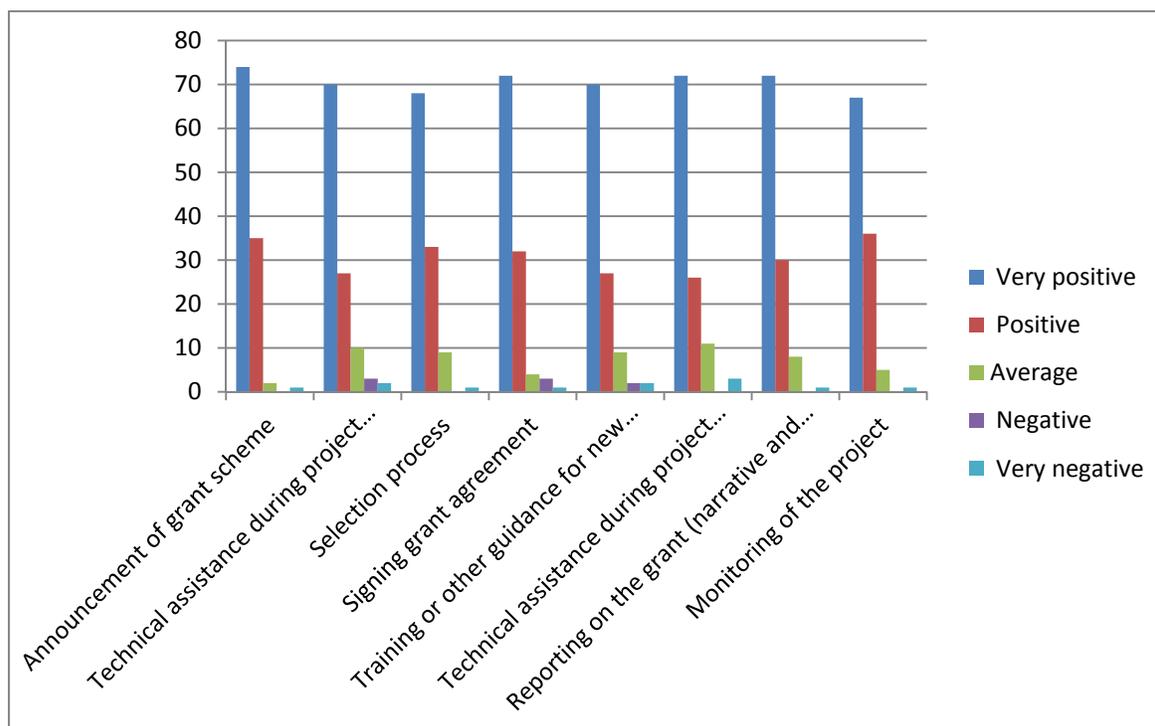
When it comes to number of grants since 2013, 71.2 percent of respondents received one grant from the grant-maker in that period; followed by 24.3 percent receiving two grants; and 4.5 percent receiving three grants. The value of grants are mainly small and medium sized; 43.2 percent received 2-5,000 euro, 18.9 percent received 5-10,000 euro, and 17.1 percent got 10-20,000 euro. Grants of more than 20,000 were made to only five organizations (4.5 percent of the sample), and grants of less than 2,000 euro to 18 organizations (16.2%). The proportion of respondents that said they received technical assistance from the grant-maker in the form of information (70.9%), training (60.2%) and mentoring (47.2%).

²⁰ The response rate across questions was high, as at least 109 respondents responded to almost all questions (except the last questions that were open-ended and optional).

Sub-Grantee Views of Grant Process

Generally speaking, experience with grant application and management process was rated as “very positive” in all aspects, as can be seen in Graph 1 below; on average, 64 percent (69 respondents) chose that response, while another 27 percent selected “positive”. Very few aspects were rated as negative or very negative.

Graph 1 – Experience of grant application and management process, by number of respondents (out of 109 total responses to this question)

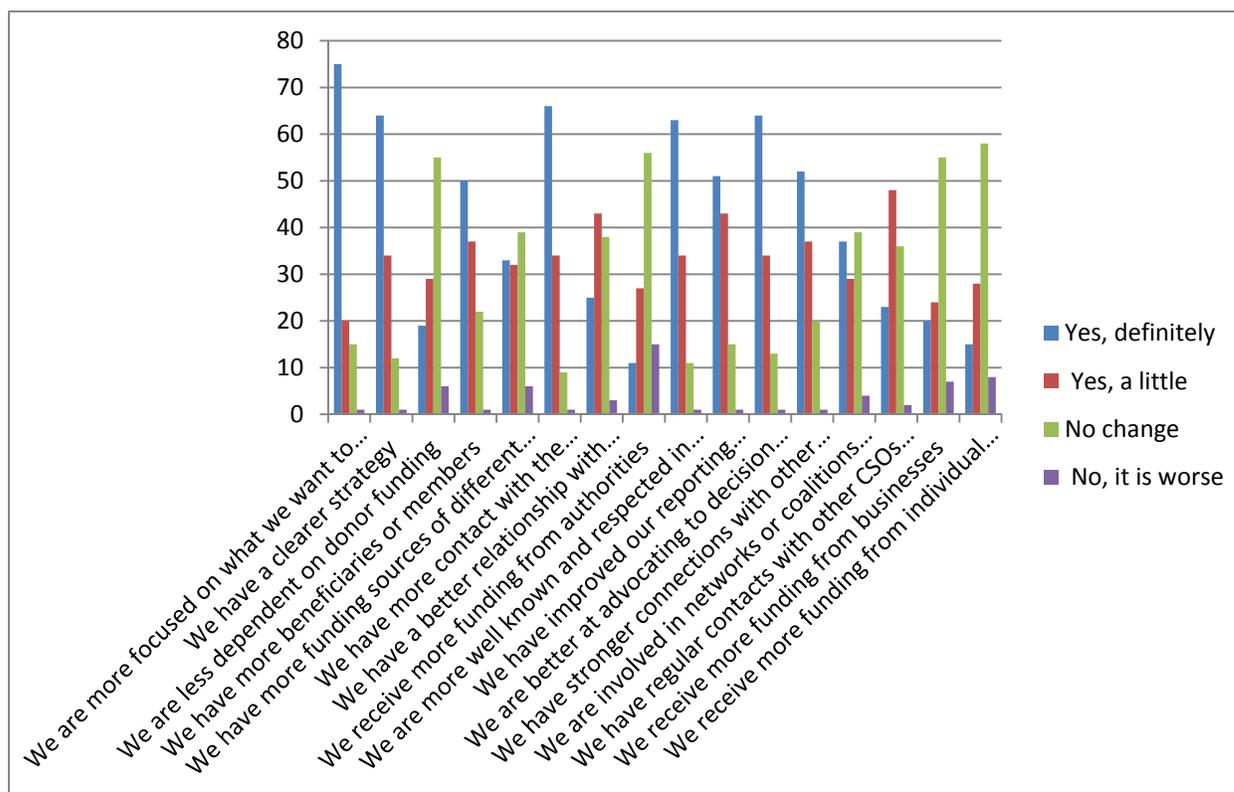


Over 88 percent of respondents stated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with all areas of their interaction with the grantmaker (financial support, technical assistance and capacity building, and the relationship in general). Looking at the usefulness of the grant to the organization itself, 78 percent stated it was very useful, and 21.1 percent useful. Only one stated that it was not that useful. At the same time, 100 percent of respondents claimed that their projects were either very useful or useful to their communities and beneficiaries.

Changes for Sub-Grantee Organizations

With respect to changes in the organizations since the receipt of the grant support, the rating by respondents is generally high in all areas related to organization strengthening, profile and advocacy. On the other hand, changes were seen as either low or non-existent in categories related to funding (See graph 2 below). The relationships with government authorities and involvement in networks were also considered to have changed very little (See Graph 2 below).

Graph 2 – Changes in organization since sub-grant received, by number of respondents (out of an average of 107 responses)



Most respondents (60%) considered it very likely that the positive changes achieved through the grant would be sustained, and another 29 percent thought it somewhat likely. Also, 91.7 percent of organizations claim to have continued with similar activities, at least to some extent; 8 percent said they had not continued. Their viewpoints were very similar with respect to the likelihood that benefits to their communities or constituencies would be sustained for at least three years.

Comparison of different types of sub-grants

Note: The low number of respondents that received grants from organizations other than Trag Foundation (9 in the case of Zajecar Initiative, 5 or less for all other grant-makers) makes it difficult to draw reliable conclusions about their experience specific to the grant-maker based on this survey. Therefore, the evaluation focused its analysis of cross-tabulation data on identifying similarities and differences among the 90 grantees of various Trag grant programs that participated in the survey.

In general, the amount of the largest grant received did not seem to make any significant difference in the level of satisfaction of grantees with the services provided by the grant-maker. As well, those that received less than 2000 euro were only slightly less optimistic about long term benefits than those that received larger amounts.

An interesting trend emerged when grantees that received training from the grant-maker were compared with those that did not. In a number of areas of organizational capacity, respondents were much more likely to indicate a “yes, definitely” if they had received training. The most significant differences (more than 10% gap) were in the following areas:

- We are better at advocating to decision makers
- We have stronger connections with other CSOs

- We have regular contacts with other CSOs that we met through the CSF Program
- Is your organization presently carrying out activities similar to the activities of the grant project?

Grant recipients of the Trag Foundation within the Active Communities Program (35 respondents) and the Community Advocacy Program (25 respondents) showed high levels of satisfaction with the financial and technical support as well as with relationship with Trag. There is no negative comment in these areas, although in technical assistance field, 11 percent of respondents state it was average.

As shown in Table 1 below, the areas in which all three types of sub-grantees indicate clear positive change (“definitely, yes”) within their respective organizations are the following:

- more focused on what we want to achieve
- clearer strategy
- more beneficiaries or members
- more contact with the community where we work/our beneficiaries
- better at advocating to decision makers

With respect to their connections with other CSOs, the responses showed more variation, with the Community Advocacy sub-grantees more likely to report definite improvement. As well, those sub-grantees were much more likely to report improved advocacy with decision makers—which is logical, given that their sub-grants were focused on advocacy.

Table 1 – Survey respondents indicating definite change in their organizations

| | Active Communities | Community Advocacy | Successful Fundraising |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Area of organizational change | % responding "definitely yes" | | |
| We are more focused on what we want to achieve | 57 | 69 | 78 |
| We have a clearer strategy | 57 | 62 | 63 |
| We have more beneficiaries or members | 51 | 46 | 56 |
| We have more contact with the community where we work/our beneficiaries | 65 | 54 | 56 |
| We are better at advocating to decision makers | 49 | 73 | 56 |
| We have stronger connections with other CSOs | 34 | 58 | 33 |

On the other hand, Table 2 below there are areas where around a significant proportion of sub-grantees state there was no change or it worsened, as follows:

- less dependent on donor funding
- more funding sources of different types
- more funding from authorities
- more funding from businesses
- more funding from individual citizens

This data underlines the view of sub-grantees that their organizations have not experienced significant positive changes in fundraising prospects and diversification of funding sources since being involved in the CSF Project sub-granting schemes.

Table 2 – Survey respondents indicating no change or worsening in their organizations

| | Active Communities | Community Advocacy | Successful Fundraising |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Area of organizational change | % responding "no change" or "worse" | | |
| We are less dependent on donor funding | 48 | 61 | 48 |
| We have more funding sources of different types | 43 | 38 | 37 |
| We have a better relationship with government authorities | 40 | 15 | 44 |
| We receive more funding from authorities | 57 | 62 | 63 |
| We are involved in networks or coalitions that are useful to us | 46 | 27 | 30 |
| We receive more funding from businesses | 54 | 65 | 56 |
| We receive more funding from individual citizens | 51 | 73 | 48 |

With respect to involvement in networks and coalitions, the responses showed more variation, with the Community Advocacy sub-grantees much less likely to report no change or deterioration. As well, those sub-grantees were less likely to report no change or worse relationships with government authorities—which is consistent with the above finding on their advocacy skills, and again logical given that their sub-grants were focused on advocacy.

In all, 60% of Active Communities, 57% of Community Advocacy and 67% of Successful Fundraising sub-grantees consider it very likely that the positive changes will be sustained and help their organization in the long term.

Situation of civil society in Serbia today

There were 75 respondents that commented on the situation of civil society in Serbia today. Interestingly, respondents find weaknesses in both sides (the government and the CSOs). The highlights of the responses are as follows:

In relation to the government, funding from the state is unreliable, difficult, and the lack of transparency in the fund distribution process is associated with abuses of power and position. The previous authorities were trying hard to present CSO work as a negative phenomenon in society that works to undermine their rule, so it takes time and a lot of work to correct this image and display it for what it is, especially in the smaller communities and their context. Position of local CSOs largely depends on the attitude of the current local government. Funds are still distributed through non-transparent and quasi competitions. Misunderstanding and poor communication and support from the local government and state institutions makes organizations almost unsustainable, particularly for small local organizations from the interior. Budget Line 481 is exhausted by the religious and sports organizations, and the civil sector is not sustainable.

Withdrawal of other donors and the inability to finance the operating costs significantly influence the work of many organizations. Smaller organizations do not have the ability to develop and maintain the organizational capacity sufficiently, which has direct impacts on the community. The community does not recognize clearly the role of CSOs, but the CSOs have a role in this as often they do not send a clear message about their role and work. There is vocal criticism of the gap in funding, support and recognition of “Belgrade based” organizations versus those in local communities outside the capital. Many respondents see that the Belgrade organizations are in better position as they are closer to

donors, central government and 'sources of power'. The other CSOs struggle with capacities, information, funds and support by local governments. Poor economic situation makes the organization difficult or impossible to create mechanisms for financial sustainability in the long term, while they are not able to compete commercially with entrepreneurs. CSOs often give up their strategic direction in order to survive, causing a waste of capacity and acquired knowledge and skills, but also losing credibility with their constituencies.

Another important division exists between the 'old' and the 'new' organizations. One of the comments is: *"In Serbia, there are a number of established, but compromised organizations whose activities are reduced to forums and round tables, which are one-off and have no influence on society as a whole or any part thereof. Grass-roots initiatives are unfortunately not recognized by the donor community and thus cannot contribute to real activism"*.

There is a need for greater promotion of the activities of CSOs in order to create a positive image in society, but also more transparency in distribution of funds at all levels by all different sources of funding. Also, adoption of a package of laws in the interest of the work of CSOs is of immeasurable importance, especially for those organizations dealing with the protection of vulnerable groups.

Most significant needs of Serbian civil society organizations at this time

Regarding most significant needs of Serbian CSOs, we received 193 answers from 92 CSO representatives. Not surprisingly, the highest numbers of responses are related to financial support and sustainability (38.86%). Other dominant responses are related to capacity building (18.65%) and networking (18.13%). Enabling legal environment is also recognized as an important need with 9.84%. Grant scheme planning and decentralization of grants outside of Belgrade were also recognized by at least five respondents as priority needs.

The following sums up the comments made, grouped by category for analysis:

Financial support: sustainable financing, financial stable sources of funding, financial sustainability (on annual basis), funding for core activities, greater financial support and the long shelf life of the project, support in achieving financial sustainability, It's still a need for funding of sustainable projects of NGOs and for the target group and the community, financing human resources within organization, ensuring sustainable funding sources, constantly stable funding

Education: Improving the capacity of the organization, better education, support the sustainability of the organization, increasing organizational capacities and their sustainability (volunteer management, PR, HR, community management, financial management ...), strengthen the capacity and resources in the NGO sector (training and technical capacities), strategic plan - not formally on paper as essential - that CSOs decide want to deal with and be committed to that goal, strengthening capacities, education, new knowledge, capacity building /strengthening the capacity of organizations development, technical support, introduction of business models, software not only organizational knowledge, help with the sustainability of small organizations, independence and work, need for professionalization.

Networking: Improving contacts with local authorities, better cooperation with citizens and service users, and better identification of their problems and needs, local support, Better communication and cooperation with state authorities, greater cooperation with the other two sectors, lack of support from local authorities for their work, responsible attitude of the state institutions with government organizations, introducing the business sector the importance and role of NGOs, acceptance by the authorities, networking, cooperation within the region, recognizing CSOs as partners from local governments, respect for OCD by authorities, mutual cooperation and exchange of experiences in the country and the region, better cooperation and partnership with the municipalities, as well as the determination of persons with cooperation with CSOs in front of the municipality, greater citizen participation, establishing long-term, strategic partnerships between organizations, creating an alliance of organizations of similar type, greater participation of CSOs in decision-making and implemented at the

local level activities, better cooperation with local governments and public institutions, support for small organizations through networks, strengthening CSOs for greater participation in policy making decision

Legal Environment/Enabling environment: The adoption of the Law on associations of persons with disabilities, it is necessary to better regulate the legal financing / self-financing organization, support for CSOs to pilot and establish social services, accredited programs and retain licensed professionals for social services through EU projects and projects of local government, the law on civil society organizations, synchronization of national with international regulations, responsible attitude of decision-makers transferred to civil society, the law on tax benefits for donors, special status for CSOs from the South of Serbia, legislation regarding the reduction of tax burdens for CSOs, assistance in licensing organizations for the provision of social services.

Grant Scheme Planning: Institutional support, more competition for the development of sustainability organization, transparent awarding of grants, training on EU grants application procedures (IPA), easier access to operational grants to CSOs outside of Belgrade, implementation of the project with long-term results with a focus on children's needs.

Decentralization: Greater representation of organization from the inside of Serbia in relation to Belgrade, Decentralization of the donor community, Decentralized support to organizations outside Belgrade

Other: Civil society in Serbia is polarized, some work well and there are others who use the political situation, so you need to carry out some arranging inside of civil sector. They spoil the whole sector, and we are exposed to negative comments and connotation. Mutual trust, more understanding by decision makers, space to work under favorable condition, office space, real support and respect, provision of adequate office space, better position, the new civic activism, greater visibility and recognizing the role of the CSO sector to citizens, openness and accountability, the need to reduce prejudice against non-governmental sector in the wider public (identification of all non-governmental organizations such as the Fund for Humanitarian Law, etc.), motivation of the population for more active involvement in solving problems.

ANNEX G: CIVIL SOCIETY FORWARD (ISC) PERFORMANCE DATA TABLE

| Indicator # | Indicators | Baseline | 2013 Target | 2013 Actual | 2014 Target | 2014 Actual |
|---|---|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| USAID DO1: Accountability of Key Democratic Institutions Strengthened | | | | | | |
| Sub IR 1.1.3 Civil Society Influence and Enhancement Increased. | | | | | | |
| CSF Program Goal: Strengthened the effectiveness and sustainability of the civil society sector to continue to make gains in its development long after ISC's and USAID's involvement ends | | | | | | |
| IR 1: Improved Advocacy Initiatives and Civic Action | | | | | | |
| I #1 | Number of Core Partners selected, disaggregated by location/region, perceived role in CS sustainability and gender/age distribution of leadership | 0 | 9 | 11 | 0 | 6 |
| I #2 | Number of people mobilized by CSF grantees, by campaign type, sex, issue focus, policy level, and geographic location | 0 | 530 | >~13909 | 530 | >~27819 |
| I #3 | Number of CSF grantees that achieved advocacy goals, by grantee type, issue focus, policy level, and geographic location | 0 | NA | NA | 35 | 39 |
| I #4 | Number of Trag and ZI sub-grantees that achieved civic action objectives, by grantee type, issue focus, policy level, and geographic location | 0 | NA | NA | 46 | 64 |

| Indicator # | Indicators | Baseline | 2013 Target | 2013 Actual | 2014 Target | 2014 Actual |
|---|---|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| I #5 | Number of Core Partners that report improved advocacy capacity as a result of CSF interventions, disaggregated by issue focus, with qualitative data to support | Level of capacities identified by Core Partners | NA | NA | 9 | 9 |
| I #6 | Number of policies/advocacy goals that have been influenced by CSOs supported by USAID (F Indicator 2.2.2.2) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 45 | 64 |
| I #7 | Number of CSOs receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions (F Indicator 2.4.1-9) | 0 | 19 | 19 | 25 | 45 |
| I #8 | Number of advocacy initiatives with gender-based focus | 0 | 9 | 10 | 16 | 16 |
| I #9 | <i>If Applicable:</i> Percentage of NGO or other international organization projects that include dedicated activities to prevent and/or respond to gender-based violence (F Indicator 5.1.1-3) | 0 | 1.6% | 1.6% | 1.6% | 1.6% |
| I #10 | Number of domestic NGOs engaged in monitoring or advocacy work on human rights receiving USG support (F Indicator 2.1.4-3), segregated by issue focus | 0 | NA | NA | 6 | 6 |
| IR 2: Improved Organizational Capacity | | | | | | |
| I #11 | Number of Core Partners that report improved organizational capacity as a result of CSF interventions, disaggregated by area of organizational development with qualitative data to support | Level of capacities identified by Core Partners | NA | NA | 11 | 11 |
| I #12 | Number and percent of Core Partners with improved financial and management systems | 0 | NA | NA | 10 | 10 |

| Indicator # | Indicators | Baseline | 2013 Target | 2013 Actual | 2014 Target | 2014 Actual |
|---|---|----------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|---|
| | (F Indicator 2.2.1.1) | | | | | |
| I #13 | Performance rating on CSF direct technical assistance provided to CSOs beyond CSF grantees and sub-grantees | 0 | NA | NA | ≥60% satisfaction rating | Excellent=70% Very Good=24% Good=6% |
| I #14 | Number of mentoring and technical assistance received by Core Partners to date disaggregated by the type of TA and critical issue | 0 | 24 | 51 | 24 | 151 |
| I #15 | Number of Core Partners with financial sustainability plan in place/followed through | 0 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 8 |
| I #16 | Number of Core Partners' advocacy exchanges disaggregated by type and sector | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 10 |
| I #17 | Number of Core Partners with linkages to both local and international actors | 0 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| IR 3: Improved Financial Sustainability and Local Philanthropy | | | | | | |
| I #18 | Number of sub-grantees with new sources of local funding (disaggregated by source, type and amount) | 0 | 16 | 16 | 18 | 33 |
| I #19 | Number of successful sustainability models developed by Trag sub-grantees, by issue focus and type of model | 0 | NA | NA | 5 | 5 |
| I #20 | Number of sub-grantees that implemented their fundraising plans | 0 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 33 |

ANNEX H: CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENTS

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form

| | |
|---|---|
| Name | Melanie Reimer |
| Title | Team Leader |
| Organization | Democracy International |
| Evaluation Position? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team Member |
| Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument) | |
| USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable) | |
| I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose. | No |
| <p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i> <i>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</i> <i>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</i> <i>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i> <i>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i> <i>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</i> | |
| <p>I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.</p> | |
| Signature | Melanie Reimer  |
| Date | 17 March 2015 |

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form

| | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Name | IRENA SLUNJSKI | |
| Title | | |
| Organization | | |
| Evaluation Position? | Team Leader | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | Team member + | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument, if applicable) | | |
| USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable) | | |
| I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose. | Yes | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No |
| <p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. | | |
| <p>I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.</p> | | |
| Signature: | [Handwritten Signature] | |
| Date: | March 17, 2015. | |

[END OF SECTION J]

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form

| | |
|--|---|
| Name | Zehra Kocapir-Dinkel |
| Title | Evaluation Expert |
| Organization | DI |
| Evaluation Position? | Team Leader Team member |
| Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument, if applicable) | |
| USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable) | |
| I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose. | Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> |

If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:

Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.
3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.
4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.

| | |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| Signature: | <i>Zehra Kocapir-Dinkel</i> |
| Date: | |

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
Tel: (202) 712-0000
Fax: (202) 216-3524
www.usaid.gov